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RETRO FUSION



ISSUE 1 - APRIL 2006
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Dizzy According to The Olivers

The creators speak to us about their finest hero

Arcade Restoration

By the man who knows it best, Archer Maclean

The Smash Martians

The highlight of the ad-breaks

Star Wars Toys

A look at the merchandising phenomenon

The Retro Ball

2005's new retro event and what's instore for '06

SAM Coupe

A history of the last British 8-bit

The A Team

Remember when TV used to be so cheesy it was great?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SONIC

A nostalgia-fest from start to finish - get some warm, fuzzy feelings here!

NEW!

including Retro news - Horace games - Forgotten arcade gems - Win an X-Arcade trackball! - And much more!

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Logic3's new handheld games console **GamesPower50** is packed with 50 fun and easy to play games that can be used either on the move (via 2.5 colour TFT display) or in the comfort of your own home (AV out allows connection to your television) making it "this-years-must-have" for all retro gaming fans.



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for believing in this magazine**

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**RETRO
FUSION**

RETRO FUSION

Welcome to issue one of Retro Fusion! I say that with a big grin on my face, as the journey to get to this point with the magazine has been a truly adventurous one to say the least. Big thanks must go to Gamestation for helping to make Retro Fusion take the jump from fanzine to commercial status and also to all those who have supported the magazine so far and continue to do so.

Issue 0 of the magazine was launched at The Retro Ball event last December and the feedback it has received has been overwhelmingly positive. We have upped the style and content for issue 1 and will endeavour to make each issue satisfy all your retro and nostalgic needs.

As the name suggests the goal of Retro Fusion is to 'fuse' together memories of your youth and present them as a series of articles and reviews for our readers. If you find yourself saying to yourself "I remember that!!" or "I used to have one of those!" or "I used to watch that!" and get a gushing sense of nostalgia sweep over you then I feel we have done our job.

Hope you enjoy the magazine and don't forget to let us know what you think of Retro Fusion on the forum that can be found at www.retrofusion.co.uk

Chris Wilkins
Retro Fusion Editor

At Gamestation we know our stuff and realise that true gamers appreciate videogame history. Therefore, when we saw the preview issue of Retro Fusion, we realised that we were looking at something new, exciting and may we dare say 'special'. Retro Fusion is not your usual 'retro' magazine as not only does it comment on the games and systems we all know and love, it also delves into other childhood memories putting a grin on your face and bringing back memories that you probably thought you had lost forever. There is literally something for everyone in Retro Fusion and at £3 an issue it's a steal. Go on, relive your youth.

It is only natural that we add this new magazine to the already extensive retro offering found in our stores. Our 'by gamers for gamers' mentality encompasses Retro Fusions own views on video gaming and we are proud to have made an agreement to be the ONLY retailer making it available on the High Street. We love it, and we know you will too.

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IT WAS PROBABLY
A BAD DECISION
TO INVITE 6TH
FORM SCIENCE
GROUP 1 TO
BRING ALCOHOLIC
BEVERAGES IN
TO SCHOOL FOR
AN EXPERIMENT
ON DISTILLATION
ATOMIC FIREBALL
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GREMLIN SOLUTIONS

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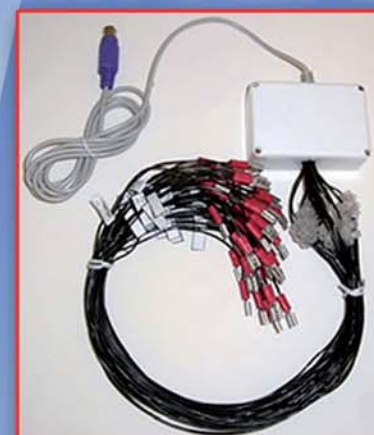
Gremlin Solutions specializes in the sale of retro gaming hardware including arcade machines, joysticks, pushbuttons, flat pack cabinet kits, X-Arcade™ Joysticks and Adapters.

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HOT FOR 2006



The GS Arcade Box® is the perfect solution for anyone who wants to build their own PC arcade cabinet. It acts as an interface between your PC and arcade joysticks/buttons. It was specifically designed to be used with Mame™ (Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator) although it will work with any PC game and even other emulators.

The kit is perfect for newbie arcade cabinet builders – save on endless hours of crimping/stripping wires and spend the time doing something more useful, like playing games!! The device comes neatly packaged as a complete unit – just mount it inside your cabinet and connect the labelled wires to the corresponding joysticks/buttons – plug in the PS2 lead into the keyboard port of your PC and start playing your favourite games – very easy.

INTRODUCING THE "VOYAGER" ARCADE COCKTAIL CABINET



The VOYAGER is the next generation of PC based, new build arcade machines, with its classic retro design being reminiscent of the original tables.

These machines have the same retro style design as the ones you remember but instead of just one game, they have the ability to play up to 36 of the most popular games from the 80's.



Exploratory
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CLASSIC TAITO GEMS



CUBEWORLD | Little COmputer People in cubes

MICROMACHINES V4

A PERFECT WORLD

24/03/2006 00:01:42

THE HISTORY OF SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Now you've probably seen this guy before, right? You know Mr Blue and spiky? That's the fella - Sonic the Hedgehog at your service. This iconic character has become THE king of the platform genre since his initial appearance on the Megadrive back in 1991. Sonic has appeared as a hot air balloon, on watches, shoes and ties and even as spaghetti shapes. He has even been voted the most popular videogame character on multiple occasions. Of course this is no indication that the games he appears in are actually any good.

Sonic Boom

Sonic was created as a mascot for the Sega Megadrive system and his first game, aptly named Sonic the Hedgehog, was an instant success selling a record-breaking 4 million copies worldwide. The gameplay was fast and action packed and saw Sonic trying to save his furry animal friends from the evil Dr. Robotnik. The game levels are truly inspiring with the famous Green Hill Zone striking a chord in my mind along with the Springyard and Labyrinth Zones. The speed of the game is absolutely breathtaking with Sonic being able to take a number of routes through each level to get to the finish. There is so much to see in the game that a good few play throughs are required to ensure that every nook and cranny has been explored. Of course as you progress through the levels they do get trickier with some of the bosses in particular being right little so-and-so's to dispose of. The introduction of

the special stages that challenge you to collect all of the Chaos Emeralds is also a great addition. This game started the 'boom' in a long trend of multi-level platforming games being released across many formats - it was only its successor that eventually knocked it off the platforming number one spot.

Sonic 2 was released a year later on 24th November 1992 which was known to the fans as the legendary Sonic Twosday. The game was a natural, but wildly superior, sequel to its predecessor in many ways. For one,

This iconic character has become the king of the platform genre since his initial appearance in 1991

the speed of the game is increased somewhat which makes the game even more exhilarating to play. The level design is also improved with some very fancy and complicated environments for Sonic to explore. Sonic 2 also introduces Tails to the player; the first of Sonics many companions that feature in the long running series.

Kieran Bro looks back over the sonic series - 15 years of Hedgehog Madness

sonic one the levels

One | Green Hill Zone



Four | Labyrinth Zone



Two | Marble Zone



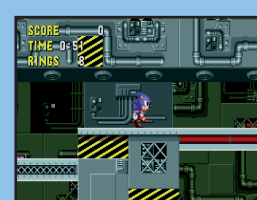
Five | Star Light Zone



Three | Spring Yard Zone



Six | Scrap Brain Zone



ers out there check this game out, especially the NTSC version.

Now let's not ignore the Sonic games that were released around this time for the Game Gear and Master System. These wonderful little gems are loosely based on their respective Megadrive incarnations and offer speed and game play that, at the time, were rarely found on these 8-bit machines. The Game Gear versions do suffer, however, from the fact that the machine itself has a small screen that makes some of the bosses an absolute fiend to deal with. The best titles for me on these formats would have to be Sonic 2, Sonic Chaos and Triple Trouble. These games have some crazy modes of transport including hang gliders and jet-boots. The 8-bit Sonic games did eventually lose a lot of the initial momentum built up from the earlier titles with strange spin-off titles like Tails' Adventure and Sky Patrol that are frankly bug ridden and terrible to play.

The following year, after Sonic 2 had been unleashed upon the world, Sega released Sonic Spinball. This title was very different to what Sonic fans had been used to up to this point and commercially it was only a moderate



success.

Sonic CD for the Mega-CD was released the same year and with its animated intro, ear-pleasing soundtrack and UFO bashing special stage it, in my opinion, eclipsed all the Sonic games before it in terms of playability and style. The game is based around Sonic's original outing and features a time travel system that requires the player to visit both the past and the future to finish the level. The game is wonderfully crafted and works well. It's also a lot trickier than most Sonic games so prepare for some real frustration here.

Sonic took a new direction in the mid nineties with Sonic 3 and Sonic and Knuckles. These two games were designed to work together via a special lock on cartridge, a feature that proved extremely popular with fans. However each title played on its own lacks the special ingredient that magically appears when combined - playability. So to get the full experience from both these games at launch was an expensive outlay. Combine both games and you're presented with an adventure of epic proportions, with many of the stages each taking a good five minutes to clear. Thankfully a save feature is available to the player to record their progress through the game. The level design takes another giant leap for hedgehog kind looking far better than ever before, introducing more switches, water slides and other neat little features that just add to the gameplay. Sonic can now lay his hands on special shields that either attract rings to him, turn him into a fire ball or even allow him to bounce in a little bubble thus allowing him to gain immunity from some of the baddies that love to attack him. The game also features a strong storyline where the player encoun-

ters endless bad guys culminating in a legendary fight between Sonic and Knuckles! Although not quite as charming as the previous games, probably due to the maze like qualities of the levels, this is still a worthy addition to the series and deserves a place in any good Sonic collection.

Sonic Spinoff?

Knuckles and his own group of friends starred in their very own game called Chaotix for the 32X Megadrive add-on. In Chaotix the two main characters hold a ring that bond each to the other. This feature allows for some very unique gameplay and special moves that, coupled with the enhanced visuals the 32X, provides a game that certainly deserves "Classic" status.

The End of an Era

With technology marching on it was inevitable that the Sonic games would move into the third dimension and this was first realised in the Sonic the Fighters arcade game. The game uses the Model 2 arcade board and looks and plays a lot like Sega's Virtua Fighter albeit with Sonic characters and more obscure additional characters like Bean and Bark. The gameplay certainly isn't deep or involving but it does provide a lot of fun and a good few laughs too.

Fans of the series feel that the move to the extra dimension resulted in the Sonic series losing a lot of its charisma and charm. However a lot of the 3D Sonic games are still worth a good



Left | Sonic The Hedgehog
The familiar title screen of the original Sonic The Hedgehog game sees Sonic waggling his finger at you before the demo mode starts

Top | Sonic 3
The ever so similar title screen of Sonic the Hedgehog 3.

Left | **Chaotix, 32X**

This game was originally planned to be Sonic 4 for the Megadrive but with Sega running out of ideas for its blue cash cow, the half-baked concept was shifted to the equally ill-conceived 32X.

Right | **Sonic Adventure, Dreamcast**

Sonic's first appearance on the Sega 32-bit home console was warmly received, even though suffering from poor camera control and appalling voice overs.

Top | **Sega 32X**

The ill-fated 32X add-on for the Megadrive. This is where it all started going wrong for Sega and was the start of its downfall in the hardware market. In 1994, as news of more powerful consoles started circulating, Sega had to jump on the bandwagon and develop its successor to the 16-bit Mega Drive.



play and the spin-off games like Sonic Jam and Sonic R for the Saturn are definitely worth watching out for. Sonic Jam is a compilation of the older games of the series accompanied by a special 3D world used for accessing the classics and special features on the games disc. It even includes a nice version of the animated Sonic CD intro along with some strange Japanese adverts for the games that involve a plasticine dancing Sonic. Sonic R on the other hand is an on-foot racing game with Sonic and Co. running around cities, ruins and a track that looks scarily similar to Mario Kart's Rainbow Road track. It is a fun game, but it is also short and can be easily completed, with the characters that are unlockable as you progress through the game not really adding much to the experience. This really is a game best enjoyed in two-player mode.

Unfortunately the Saturn wasn't proving to be the most popular console at the time, and so never received its own dedicated Sonic game that was true to the original series. There was a game in production called Sonic Xtreme created by the infamous Sonic

Team USA and although it looked the part, the gameplay was certainly odd with our spiky friend being able to run on walls and upside down in a 3D square shaped arena. Thankfully this was cancelled before the public got their sticky mitts on it.

A New Adventure

With the launch of the Dreamcast, the Sonic Team pulled out all the stops and created Sonic Adventure. The game features all new voice-overs for Sonic and his pals, along with a free roaming section to the game, cut scenes, CGI, the works. It was initially well received but players soon complained of a useless camera angle and awful voiceovers, a problem that still plagues the 3D Sonic games to this very day. Still, the game is enjoyable and features some great level design, including a section with a giant whale leaping over you. It was also this game where the Chao first appeared, little animals that you could feed by giving them items found in the game Tamagotchi style. You could even download your Chao onto your VMU or Gameboy Advance in order that you could rear them on the move.



This game was followed up by the imaginatively titled Sonic Adventure 2, basically more of the same, and introduced Shadow, who has recently been given his own game to run around (and scarily enough, shoot things) in. The game is extremely linear with levels instead of a whole world to run around in. A number of small glitches and dire camera angles make the game a real chore to play at times and incredibly frustrating as you fall through the floor for the umpteenth time.

Console Free Sega

Of course with Sega saying they were pulling out of the console market, fans feared the worst for the franchise. But thankfully, Sonic stretched his legs and zoomed onto other platforms.

The first to appear was Sonic Pocket Adventure for the Neo Geo Pocket Colour. This game is absolutely fantastic and looks reminiscent of Sonic 2 on the Megadrive. Although a little easy, the game is immensely playable and unfortunately not experienced by many due to the lack of sales of the handheld.



Then came a frankly shoddy port of the Adventure series to the Gamecube and for the Gameboy Advance we got, funnily enough, Sonic Advance. The latter game retains the look and feel of Megadrive games of old and is a lot faster to boot. These games are well worth picking up as they introduce new characters to the series and feature some levels that look scarily like some of your old favourites.

Sonic Battle and Sonic Pinball Party for the Gameboy Advance followed and more recently Sonic Rush for the Nintendo DS which has been praised for its return to the series' roots.

Also recently released is a new 3D Sonic game called Sonic Heroes that features a 3-character tag team style game play. Although this is essentially a good idea it is poorly executed and makes for a clumsy game not to mention the amazing amount of bugs present like the random falling of your character through floors.

Sonic Mega Collection and Sonic Gems Collection are ports of a large portion of the older games with the former including the Megadrive series, and the latter including Sonic R, Sonic the Fighters, a whole host

of Game Gear games and the classic, not to mention the hard to get hold of Sonic CD, as well as all the usual artwork extras.

Toot Toot Sonic Warrior!

The music in each Sonic game has always been something to look forward to, with each tune being quite diverse from the almost anthem like Green Hill Zone track through to the Yank-Rock vocal tracks of the Adventure series. The older games especially have some awesome melodies that add great value to the ambience of the level they are played on. Sonic CD added some comedy vocals into the mix with the famous Toot Toot Sonic Warrior theme tune accompanying the introduction to the game. Sonic songs have always been popular and have spawned a huge number of remixes, the most popular being Ice Cap Zone's theme which often gets remixed into a blend of computer sounds and Ibiza Trance. Over clocked Remix has a massive library of remixed songs available for download from Sonic games through the ages, visit their website at <http://www.ocremix.org>

Left | **Sonic R, Saturn**

Sonic R can best be described as the Saturns answer to such games as Mario Kart 64 and Diddy Kong Racing. Choose to play as Sonic, Knuckles, Tails or Amy and take part in a footrace (although Robotnik and Amy are in vehicles) across four different track set in the Sonic Universe. Each race is three laps long, and some of the most innovative play mechanics I've ever seen in a racer are in place.

Right | **Sonic Advance, GBA**

The irony of it all, after years of Sega games only appearing on Sega specific consoles, here we have Sonics first appearance on Nintendo hardware.

Above | **Sonic Jam, Game.com**

A Sonic game yes, but pretty much everything that sums up Sonic has been lost in the translation to the Game.com - speed, colour, the cartoon styles worlds. Sonic in name but very little else.

With The Launch of the Dreamcast, the Sonic team pulled out all the stops and created Sonic Adventure

Looking back over the 15-year history of the sonic series sega have yet to surpass the sheer game play and quality of the titles on the megadrive

MIDWAY-ARCADE-TREASURES



These have been out for a little while now but a good retro collection never dates. The first two compilations in this trilogy cater for different generations of players. Collection One will suit the older gamer brought up on Defender and Joust,

while the second exists to entertain the Mortal Kombat faithful. I personally bought the first Treasures pack for two games in particular - Paperboy and Road Blasters. I would always play Paperboy at the arcade with the handlebar-mounted machine and I have many fond memories of Road Blasters, played as it was meant to be - in a sit down cabinet. Traditionalists will argue that Gauntlet, Defender and Joust are the true classics here, but certain games have their own special appeal and it was Paperboy and Roadblasters that melted my heart.

The first compilation, in my opinion, is the best of the bunch, with so many classic games oozing out of each pore that it becomes hard to know where to start. For a measly £15 you get 24 classic arcade games including Spy Hunter, Gauntlet, Marble Madness, Smash TV, Robotron 2084 and Rampart in addition to those already mentioned.

Pack number two would be the Conference compared to the Premiership of the first one, the Mortal Kombat games being the mainstays of this compilation alongside Total Carnage. Hard Drivin', the sim-come-arcade game, was my game of desire from this selection mainly because when

you saw it in the arcade at the time it was like nothing ever seen before. Some of the games in this one though are just sequels or remixes of games from pack one. Overall, it's just about worth the price as long as there is at least one game here that tickles your nostalgic fancy.

The third compilation is a complete travesty. On the back of the case it states "Fuel Your Racing Fever". Let's not talk about it or I'll be forced to feed my head into a blender... All I will say is only buy it if you have an irrational need to complete the trilogy.

Midway Arcade Treasures 1 - 90%
This NEEDS to be in everyone's collection.

Midway Arcade Treasures 2 - 78%
A lackluster compilation saved by the Mortal Kombat games.

Midway Arcade Treasures 3 - 20%
So bad I'd rather nail my testicles to a Ferris wheel.

Extras: Videos, info and cabinet art.

TAITO-LEGENDS

If you're looking for one of the most well balanced retro packages available, then Taito Legends was made for you. The fact that you get so much for under £20 is unbelievable, but when you also consider exactly what you are getting for your money, it then becomes imperative that everyone has to own a copy of this for their respective consoles.

Now normally there is one special game you buy these compilations for, but that is just not possible due to what is on offer here. Space Invaders is an iconic piece of gaming history... "But I have the Space Invaders Anniversary game" I hear you say... Well you lot have been well catered for too. The gun merchants will get a blast out of Operation Wolf and Thunderbolt while the platform folks have New Zealand Story, Bubble Bobble and Rainbow Islands thrown in for good measure. Other games worthy of mention are Elevator Action, Rastan and in my own opinion, Qix, which I have always had a soft spot for. The compilation also includes Qix's bigger and better brother, Volfied, which I have played more than any other game on the compilation due to it's sheer addictiveness and tense atmosphere - players are always left

wondering whether or not you can make it back to the safety of the outer wall without being killed by the swarm of monsters on show.

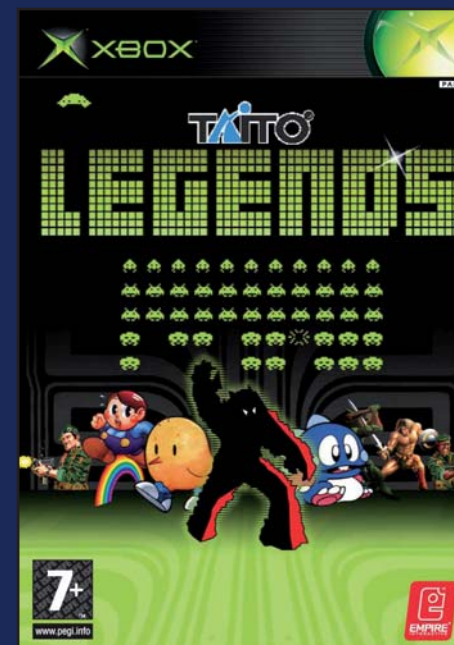
As with every compilation of this type there are a few niche games that will enjoy limited appeal. Zoo Keeper falls into this category, with others like Gladiator and Great Swordsman pretty much held in the same kind of yes/no regard.

I personally bought the compilation because it had a game on it that I had not played in the arcades for years. That game was Continental Circus, a racing game that just seemed to have a Super Monaco GP feel to it and was always tense, with the driver trying desperately to get their car back to the pits before it blew up.

This is an extremely good selection of Taito's back catalogue and, with the recent release of Taito Legends 2, now is a very good time to recreate a seaside arcade in the comfort of your own home.

Overall - 86%

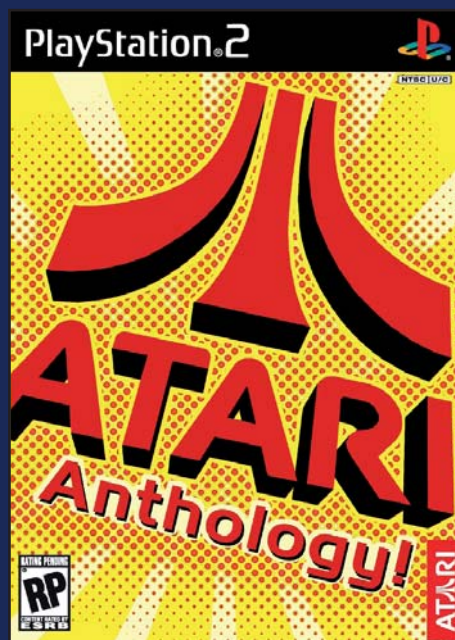
It's a great compilation that whets the appetite whilst leaving enough room to keep you gagging for more. Great stuff.



Extras - Interviews, Flyer artwork and 3D arcade cabinet models

RETRO COMPILATION ROUNDUP

This is a tricky one. It almost cons you into buying it by stating that there are 85 games available "that started a revolution!" It's only when you really scratch beneath the surface that you realise that this isn't



quite the compilation you may have been expecting. Eighteen of the 85 games come from the arcades with the remaining games arriving from the massive back catalogue of Atari 2600 games. This is by no means a bad thing, giving you the best of the arcade and the console games in one tidy package. It is very well presented with a constellation style interface to select your titles and the games are also split into different genres making it easy to navigate.

Everyone knows Atari were creators of essential coin-op gems, like Centipede, Tempest, Battlezone and Asteroids. These have managed to stay fresh amongst the cobwebs of history and remain just as playable as they were back in their day. It's always a privilege to play these classics and the compilation is worth obtaining for these titles alone.

It's when you start looking into the console side of the pack that it becomes an interesting compilation. There are 67 Atari 2600 games waiting for your delectation. The one thing that you have to do is lock away the modern day opinion of graphics that new age consoles give you because these classics are as basic as

games come. Of course, the brilliance of these titles is that regardless of the graphics, the playability shines through.

The games I remember playing when I had a 2600 were Battlezone, Crystal Castles and Desert Falcon, each of which I had a fond affection for even though I was never very good at them and died constantly. With so many titles to choose from though, you will be there for absolutely ages going through them all. The best thing about playing through the many games on offer is that there will almost certainly be a game that you could never remember the name of, but once you boot it up it's like reuniting with a long lost friend. All in all, it's a great little bundle of Atari history and much better to pick up than the quick cash-in that was the Flashback plug-in joystick.

Overall - 83 %

A great little collection worth getting for the arcade titles alone, the 2600 games are a true nostalgic bonus.

Extras - Interviews, box art, manual scans and photo galleries.

ATARI-ANTHOLOGY

Another retro anthology worthy of mention would be this collection of some of Capcom's major hits - like Street Fighter 2, Ghosts 'n' Goblins and Commando - and a few that are in here for posterity, such as Vulgus, Capcom's first arcade game made over 20 years ago in 1984.

It says on the box that there are 22 classic games, but I can't bring myself to agree with that claim as three of them are Street Fighter 2 games - the original, the Champion Edition and the "let's turn the speed up a notch" Hyper Fighting edition. SFI purists will, of course, love this but I feel it's just a corner cutting exercise and that in a strange way saying "over 20 games" instead of 22 wouldn't make you feel that little less bit cheated.

Maybe I'm being slightly hyper-critical as the pack itself is a thoroughly well balanced compilation with some of the finest games that Capcom have produced for the masses over the years. I bought it mainly for Ghouls 'n' Ghosts, but I've also been drawn in by Commando, a game I always remember playing on the C64 - a very well made version by

Elite released on their Encore label. It was and still is such a simple, yet addictive game that grabs you by the throat and screams "play me again!"

Final Fight is something that a lot of people remember playing in the arcades, and is held affectionately in many peoples hearts, mine included. It's in there along with a few of the 19XX shoot 'em ups, Bionic Commando, Mercs (think of the original Commando on steroids) and also Forgotten Worlds, which I had kind of, umm, forgotten about.

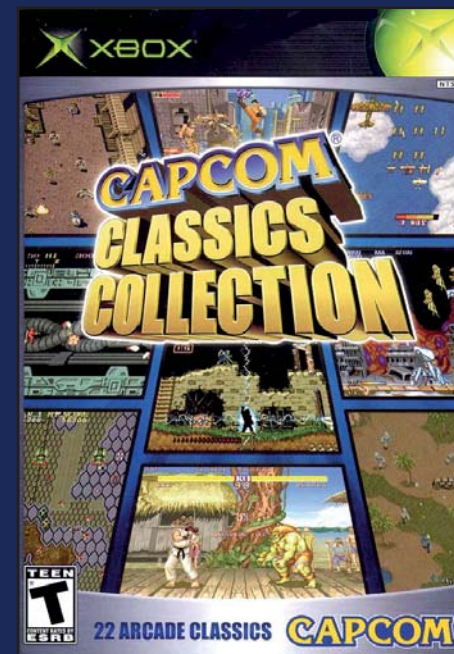
Even if the title didn't include "Vol. 1" you would easily come to the conclusion that there would be a second volume. Capcom still have such a big back catalogue to cover I am sure that we will see Super Street Fighter 2 alongside some other classics that we want to play again. Add to that the wealth of extra stuff you get and this becomes a cracking little box of treats waiting to be opened.

Overall - 92%

Essential mainly because of the G'n'G selections and SFI but there are many other great games giving you every reason to pick this up today.

Extras - Remixed Music, Artwork,

playing tips, game history and game cast.



And finally... The future of Retro gaming compilations is looking good, with compilations from Tecmo and Sega having just been released and sequels to Capcom and Taito's first volumes. The future is most definitely retro.

CAPCOM-CLASSICS-VOL#1

CAPCOM PLUG IT IN & PLAY TV GAME

Paul Hancock takes the new device from Jakks Pacific for a Spin and relives some fond Arcade memories



Above | The Packaging Front
The packaging protects the Joystick extremely well and is decorated in bright colourful graphics of the Capcom games that can be played on the device.



Above | The Package Rear
The rear of the box has screen shots of the 3 games and advertises the game key feature of the device - the ability to purchase keys that can be plugged into the Joystick and provide you with further Capcom games to play.



Above | The Joystick
The Joystick in all its glory. On the rear is the on/off switch and a 'MENU' button that returns the device to the game selection menu once pressed. An LED shines bright red when the device is switched on. The GAME KEY cartridge is plugged into the front of the Joystick.

There has been a veritable deluge of retro-styled plug 'n' play TV games recently, covering a diverse range of platforms. From the simplicity of Atari's 2600-themed offering, via the wonderful SID-tunes of the Commodore64 and the playability of the MegaDrive, to the glory of some truly classic Arcade gems. All have met with varying degrees of retail success.

The latest offering from Jakks Pacific Inc. offers three of Capcom's most popular arcade titles from the 1980s - Commando, 1942 and Ghosts'n Goblins.

Retailing at a hefty £19.99 for the unit plus the 3 integrated games, it requires 4 x AA batteries and a TV with phono input sockets for audio and video.

The device packaging is extremely robust as well as being attractive on the eye in depicting screen images of the games as well as appropriately themed game art.

The joystick itself is a nice piece of kit. It has a good weight and comfortably fits in the hand for long periods of gaming. The build quality is equally high, providing a robust and sturdy unit that doesn't rattle like other plug 'n' play units on the market.

The unit has 4 rubber feet preventing it from sliding if placed on a surface, although suckered feet would have been welcome. The battery compartment conforms to the standard for electronic toys these days - an "under the unit" affair with a single screw to keep the batteries safely in place.

The cable length is around 2 meters, affording a more comfortable gaming position on the sofa rather than sitting cross-legged on the floor only a foot away from the screen. A single phono-jack for video input and a single jack for audio connection to the TV are provided.

The device has two features that sets it apart from other TV type games currently on the market.

First is the appropriately named "CC-Key" slot. Effectively an expansion socket at the front of the unit, it enables the gamer to build up a library of Capcom arcade games by purchasing further titles (provided on

a "Capcom Key" memory stick) and simply slotting them into the unit - no need to buy any more joysticks, just insert the game of choice and away you go. Gamers can purchase potential titles such as the 19xx series (1941: Counter Attack, 1943: Battle for Midway, 19XX: War Against Destiny), Bionic Commando, Black Tiger, Final Fight, SideArms and Street Fighter II - the future for this device is very bright indeed.

The second feature is the ability the device has to save high scores. One of the main complaints about plug 'n' play TV units is the loss of high score data once the unit is switched off. This is no longer a problem. It seems those clever chaps at Jakks Pacific Inc. have listened to their audience and high-score data is now saved to the unit once a game is over, promoting the "just one more go" addictive quality that these games already possess in spades. All that's needed now is the ability to use a power supply unit instead of eating through those AA's every couple of days and Jakks could practically own this market.

So, is it any good? In a word or three - Yes, oh yes! The only negative here is the price - £19.99 for just 3 games might seem a little steep, but the quality of the games and the unit itself really are up to scratch. With the ability to expand the experience with games-on-a-stick (via the CC-Key) and the high-score "save" function, the longevity offered makes up for the relatively high purchase price.

For fans of the three games included this is nothing short of a must-have item, for everyone else - well, let's face it, who "doesn't" like Ghosts 'n' Goblins, 1942 and Commando?

PACKAGING 80%
JOYSTICK 85%
BUTTONS 70%
BUILD 85%
GAMES 90%

OVERALL 85%



Above | Ghosts' N Goblins
Capcom's arcade-turn-console action platformer Ghosts'n Goblins is a true 2D classic. The game, which stars Sir Arthur, a knight on a mission to rescue Princess Guinevere, travels players through six huge 2D scrolling levels rained with obstacles, enemies and other infuriating hazards.



Above | Commando
You are a crack soldier with special training. You have been given a highly secret mission and are about to enter into fierce guerrilla warfare. The mission is to annihilate the enemy and to rescue important captives. To do this you must destroy the enemy base, which is said to be impregnable.



Above | 1942
1942 pits a lone ship against countless enemies over backdrops loosely reminiscent of the WWII-era Pacific theatre. Launching from allied carriers, you'll navigate. Should things get hairy, 1942's innovative "roll" feature can briefly lift you above the action.

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gamestation

IT'LL ONLY LOAD IF...

PETER PARRISH RELIVES TAPE LOADING FRUSTRATION

Sometimes, desperation sets in. When all else fails, strange things begin to occur within the psychological makeup of the average Spectrum gamer. Weird and disconcerting beliefs wrap their clammy hands around the hapless victim, resulting in some extremely odd practises indeed.

You'll all be aware of the scenario. Having received a grubby C90 tape full of lusciously illegal Speccy games via your brother's cousin's best friend Nigel (oh hush, we all did it), you're now chomping at the 8-bit to get playing. But then - DIS-ASTER - your new-found source of joy is completely refusing to load. Naturally, it will wait until the last possible moment to fail. Each and every time you'll sit through the sounds of a demon being wrenched from the very heart of hell, watching that irritating counter tick down towards 000. Each and every time it'll hang on 004. Or perhaps 007 for some kind of terrible Bond film irony. If you're really lucky, you might catch a tantalising glimpse of the fabled "R Tape Loading Error".

Truly this must be some kind of terrible cosmic karma for being a filthy, filthy pirate. F.A.S.T. don't forget, you know. They're always watching.

Ahem Yes, well, whether it was a £5.99 original or a shameful 'freebie', we all had occasional problems getting games to work. Luckily there are some tried and tested methods (as well as some untested and frankly ridiculous methods) to aid and abet the frustrated Spec-chum. And these are they:

Sent to Siberia

If you're trying to load games in some kind of group, it is accepted groupthink knowledge that one member of the party may very well be bringing 'bad vibes' to the room. Much like witches, these vibes can cause milk to go sour, result in various farmyard animals miscarrying and warp Spectrum tapes so much that they absolutely fail to load. The only way to prevent this from happening is to expel the troublesome person from the room for the full duration of the loading period. Should the game still not load, it may be necessary to check that the exiled party is far enough away from the affected area. Even listening at the door may be enough to misalign the fragile magnetic textures of the tape.

Results: In truth, mixed. Any success gained from this method is probably due to coincidence. However, the mind is a mysterious thing--perhaps the designation of a scapegoat and the resultant chilled atmosphere within the room is enough to put the 8-bit machinery suitably at ease? Further studies are required. 3/10

Tech Savvy

Like me, you may have been using a glossy 128k Spectrum. Sure, you're the envy of the world, but now you have at least two different loading methods to choose from. In certain instances old games may act like petulant children and refuse to function unless you pander to their every whim. In this case, by using 48k mode. Advanced users may wish to attempt all manner of BASIC-related sorcery in combination with this.

Results: Easily the least entertaining method, but probably the one which will meet with most success. There is most assuredly a deeply technical reason for this involving CODING and maybe even PICTURES OF PROGRAMMERS, but I can't even begin to guess what it might be. Definitely works though. 9/10

Screw Loose

As well as a wacky 48k mode, my 128k Speccy also had a small hole just beneath the plastic flip-up tape deck. Nestling snugly inside this tiny, mysterious gap was an equally tiny screw. This screw, it transpired, contained great power. No-one is quite sure who first tampered with the screw, yet it quickly became known that the combination of a miniature screwdriver and the care of an archaeologist unearthing Tutankhamun's more exciting brother could be used to improve the loading chances of any stubborn game. Some required a little tightening, others a hint of loosening--all responded to the technique.

Results: Bizarrely and inexplicably consistent. Messing around with that screw can make games work. No, shut up--it really can. I swear to you. It takes time, it takes effort; no doubt it also takes a bit of luck, but by the almighty gloves of Dizzy it actually works. 7/10

Blind Faith

Sometimes, desperation sets in. When all else fails, strange things begin to occur within the psychological makeup of the average Spectrum gamer. Weird and disconcerting beliefs wrap their clammy hands around the hapless victim, resulting in some extremely odd practises indeed. They start to wonder if staring at the loading counter with unblinking eyes will make the game work, or whether a ceremonial 'laying of hands' upon the tape deck for the loading duration will find favour with the shadowy powers who prevent tape errors.

Results: Extremely poor. It may be necessary at this point to perform some kind of intervention upon the gamer before their gentle grip on reality is lost forever. Eventually we all have to face the traumatising fact that Bobby Bearing may simply never work again. 0/10

Dance Magic

If the sufferer is not reached in time they may become highly volatile, dabbling in the dark arts or even attempting to use the Labyrinth soundtrack in order to get their preferred diversion up and running. Don't be surprised to find shrunken heads, dubious potions or massively oversized codpieces being used in various deviant rituals. Urgh, the horror.

Results: Look, it really doesn't matter at this stage. Call the emergency services, call a priest ... just do something! Admittedly though, selling your soul to Lucifer is far more useful than using a tape head cleaner ever has been. 2/10

So there you have it. Using a delicious cocktail of technical ability, superstition and outright stupidity, it is possible to get even the most resistant of programs to load correctly. It may leave the user permanently brain damaged and twisted beyond all normal forms of human recognition, but, in the end, isn't it still just about worth it?



The humble C-15 that turned many a school child into playground pirates

a small screwdriver was a must for anyone with tape issues





Slr clive and the attempt to bring his 8-bit computer up to date.



Above | **Heatsinked 128k**
Keeping with the design of the Spectrum+ but sprouting some fins from the right hand side - apparently to keep it cool. Did they ever get seriously hot?

Some days Lady Luck sort of follows you around and everything seems to go your way. The first Sunday in February was a bit like that for me. It all started when I got out of bed 10 minutes or so after the wife and kids and went downstairs to make the obligatory morning cuppa for myself. The kids were eating their morning cereal with lashings of milk that they had served themselves from the fridge. In the rush to satisfy their hunger pangs the milk bottle had been knocked over, spilling 99% of its contents over the kitchen sink. The 1% that was left was rescued and used to make a perfect cup of coffee for myself that helped to kick-start my day. I thought to myself how lucky I was.

off some of the retro, and not so retro, items that the store has for sale. In the case of the branch I visited, their display was some distance away from the entrance to the store and could be easily missed by the casual visitor. On looking through the window I was confronted by the usual Sega, Nintendo and Sony suspects that I had seen so many times before. This time though there was a couple of items that grabbed my attention. Sprawled on the floor of the display was the infamous Steel Battalion control panel and accompanying game for the Xbox.

I had not seen one of these before and was gob smacked at the size of the thing as well as the asking price

some unknown games inside. To my absolute amazement he carried towards me a large cardboard box that was full to the brim with items. He put the box next me and returned back behind the counter to complete the sale. I sifted through the top items and was delighted to see a boxed Currah Speech Synthesiser and a Sinclair Interface 2 amongst the many cassette cases and boxes. A big smile spread across my face, and a tingle of excitement started to spread throughout me. I had just explored the tip of the ice burg and already found some gems, what else would I find in Pandora's box? The Gamestation employee informed me that the price of the computer had been originally set at £50 and had been for sale for many weeks without any customers enquiring about it. They had not got around to sorting the box of games so did not know what was being provided in the sale in its entirety.

I transported my new treasure to the car and went about looking for the family, keen to get home and see what else was in the box of delights.

On arriving home and bringing my new purchase inside, I tipped the contents of the box gently onto my lounge carpet and started to make some order of the items. First I spotted Sabre Wulf by Ultimate Play The Game and then Underwulde and Jetpac by the same games developers. I put those to one side. I then started to recognise some of the games I had owned in my original collection when I was a teenager, Uridium, Penetrator, Heartland, Jet Set Willy, Fairlight etc and put them into another grouping; Psytron, Spy Vs Spy and Shadowfire by Beyond Software went into another. And so it went on.

Over the next hour or so I set eyes on games I had not seen for over 20 years or more, the majority being in absolute mint condition. I was like a

child in a candy shop. The buzz I got from looking through the contents of the box of goodies was just like the "cannot wait to get home from school to play my Speccy" feeling I used to have in my early teens - it was an

forum member to be 'The' find of the century (so far).

And what will I do with my new-found instant Spectrum collection? Keep it of course - there are too many memories linked with some of those

It was an Overwhelming, grin inducing wave of pure Nostalgia

overwhelming, grin inducing wave of pure Nostalgia.

I took photos of the collection and posted the images onto the retro forums I frequent for all to see. I also posted snaps of the Spectrum 128k box, inserts and computer itself.

This haul was touted by one

games, cassette inlays and instruction cards to leave them go - just don't tell the wife!

So there we have it. Let Retro Fusion know about your lucky finds and we will print them in future issues of the magazine.

@RARE@Games

CYBERUN :: Cyberun is very similar to Ultimate's other classic Lunar Jetman in style and is truly an excellent shoot em up type arcade adventure game. The playing area is massive and the Spectrum special effects, like the parallax stars, are fantastically realised. A true classic.

Average Ebay Price: £10-£15

SABREWULF :: You control Sabreman in his search for four pieces of a lost amulet within a jungle maze infested with creatures and natives intent on your demise. The game contains the winning formula of speed, graphical delight and exploration that ensured high sales and desirability.

Average Ebay Price: £8-£10

UNDERWULDE :: Again you play the role of the infamous Sabreman, your task this time to escape from a castle filled with gremlins and use volcanic bubbles of gas to your advantage. The action is side on and has 3 different endings.

Average Ebay Price: £5

PENTAGRAM :: Pentagram was the fourth game in the Sabreman series and is the follow up to Knightlore within which our hero has to find the sections of a Pentagram within a forest location filled with spiders and other manifestations including ghosts and broomsticks riding witches.

Average Ebay Price: £20-£30

GUNFRIGHT :: This game is essentially Knightlore in the wild west where you as the sheriff have to explore the town for wanted criminals as depicted on the wanted posters.

Average Ebay Price: £10

JETPAC :: One of Ultimate Play the Game's earliest efforts on the 16k Spectrum and probably one of its most fondly remembered. As Jetman you have to fly around the screen using your Jetpac in order to locate pieces of your ship and thereafter fuel. The screen was filled with all manner of coloured flying enemies that had to be shot or avoided during your quest.

Average E-bay Price: £3-£5



Above | **The Outer box**
Considering its age, the distinctive red outer box of the Spectrum 128 packaging is in fairly good shape.



Above | **Inside the box**
The polystyrene inserts are in excellent condition. This picture shows off the pristine Spectrum 128k computer with its power supply and ariel lead.



Above | **The games**
Over 150 classic Spectrum games were in the haul.



Above | **The @RARE@ games**
Amongst the gems in the Gamestation haul were found seven Ultimate Play The Game games.

to find one boxed for such a low price just summed up my luck that day.

Fact | 128k Models

There were many different models of the 128k Spectrum, most of them brought about when Amstrad bought the rights from the failing Sinclair.

Below | Spectrum 128k +3

The +3 model was the first and last to feature a built in disc drive, featuring the uncommon 3 1/4" size disks as used by Amstrad's own PCW range of word processors. A success? Not really.





THE SAM COUPE ...AN 8-BIT WITH ATTITUDE

the LAST BRITISH
8-BIT Computer led
a troubled life -
was it a case of too
little, too late?

Top | The SAM Coupe
This stylish piece of plastic retained the patriotic colour scheme of red, white and blue. It came with a full size keyboard, including function and cursor keys, and an array of ports on the back panel. The disk drives were of the highest specifications and would easily slot in to the base for easy upgrades.

In the mid 1980's Miles Gordon Technology Plc (MGT for short), led by Alan Miles and Bruce Gordon, concentrated on hardware for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum, with their flagship products being the Disciple disk interface followed by the '4-D' disk interface. However, they were aiming higher with their goal of creating a new computer to go head to head with the Atari ST and the Amiga. In early 1988, they announced they were working on the Sam Coupe, which was met with a lot of enthusiasm. Magazines featured interviews and progress reports, showing the stage at which the early prototypes were at, and followed the progress as the specifications of the machine grew.

The Sam Coupe concept was to build a cheap 8-bit micro, but with capabilities matching the 16-bit computers, and to an extent the final specifications did come closely up to par with the likes of the Atari ST.

The Sam is powered by a 6MHz Z80 processor, and was originally offered with either 256K or 512K of memory, and had a 32K ROM which held the built in BASIC that was written by Dr Andrew Wright. As well as the processor, at the heart of the Sam was the custom ASIC chip that was designed by Bruce, which provides the core housekeeping functions of the Sam, including graphics, MIDI and memory control. Originally to have been manufactured by Fujitsu, MGT finally chose VLSI to make the chip, and with the change in manufacturer and size of the custom chip possible it allowed more features to be added than originally intended.

The ASIC gave the Sam four graphics modes: Mode 1 mim-

icked the screen memory of the ZX Spectrum (256x192 pixels, with 8x8 attributes). This was to be a key part of MGT's strategy with the Sam. They were relying on sales by having a ZX Spectrum emulator bundled with it so it would appeal to current Spectrum owners, who would then hopefully upgrade to a Sam instead of an Amiga, as it would be possible for them to continue to use their current collection of Spectrum games. Mode 2 was an extended attribute mode giving a screen resolution of 256x192 pixels, with 8x1 attributes, similar to what was added to the Sinclair Timex computers in the USA. The other two modes were true bitmap modes: Mode 3 was a high-resolution mode

implemented that made the Sam Coupe stand out. The case featured two internal bays for the disk drives to slip into to upgrade the machine easily, and there was also a SCART socket on the back to give composite video and RGB outputs - something that wasn't seen before or since on a home computer.

Initially touted for a launch in the late summer of 1989, months of delays meant that the Sam Coupe didn't actually arrive until December 1989. Sadly, there were still further hiccups with the launch. The disk drives that were to have been launched at the same time were delayed even further, with users having to rely on cassette tapes for several months before

The Sam Coupe concept was to build a cheap 8-bit micro, but with capabilities matching the 16-bit computers

of 512x192 pixels, with four colours out of a 128 palette. Finally, Mode 4 was the main Sam graphics mode used which gives a resolution of 256x192 pixels with 16 colours out of the 128. Even more colours could be used by changing the palette registers during the screen update.

Sound was provided by an "off the shelf" sound chip from Philips, the SAA1099, which gave six channel stereo sound using FM synthesis and two noise generators, effectively giving the Sam double the sound capabilities of the Atari ST. Full MIDI capabilities were also built into the Sam as standard.

A few innovative ideas were also

on the ground. Top software houses at the time, including Ocean, US Gold and Codemasters, all initially expressed an interest in producing games for the Sam Coupe. It soon grew apparent their interest was shifting to the 16-bit machines, and a vicious circle became evident - they would not write software until more machines were sold, and people would not buy the machines until there was more software.

The Sam hadn't even been out a year by the time in late 1990 Miles Gordon Technology went bust and folded. However, within a very short space of time, Alan Miles and Bruce Gordon were personally able to raise enough capital to buy back the assets and form a new company together - Sam Computers Ltd, or SamCo as it was became affectionately known as.

Once again the Sam was back in production and now available fitted with 512K as standard, with at least one disk drive to provide programmers a base level to aim for, there was no need for games having to be limited to run in 256K or load in from tape.

With a whole new sense of direction, SamCo ploughed ahead. New hardware emerged including 1 Megabyte memory expansions, communications interfaces increasing the capabilities and connectivity of the Sam. SamCo also formed Revelation, their own software label, which attracted the attention of coders and soon a wide variety of games were available on the Sam - including Prince of Persia, which was licensed from Domark/Broderbund and was able to rival the popular 16-bit versions. They also started the 'SamCo Newdisk' magazine disk in early 1992 that became highly popular, and kept Sam users fully up to date with the latest news, developments and demos.

At the same time, more companies were forming, Blue Alpha Electronics who had very close ties to SamCo, produced new Sam hard-

ware including a sound sampler and a speech synthesiser, several Sam specific software houses formed and released new games and magazine disks. Overall, there was a wealth of games and software available.

However, behind the scenes, SamCo was slowly going down, and in June 1992 the company went into liquidation. It was the end of the game for Alan and Bruce. However, the Sam lived on with Blue Alpha Electronics taking over production for a short time, until West Coast Computers was specifically started up to carry on manufacturing and selling the Sam Coupe.

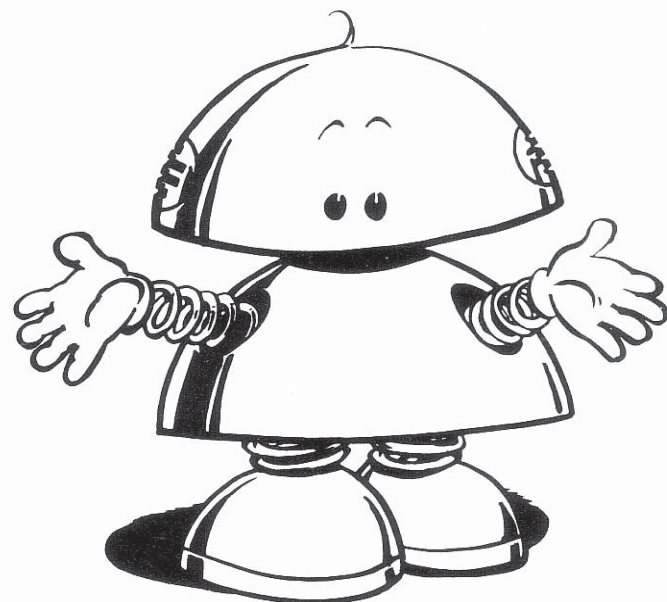
In 1994, West Coast updated the Sam's image with what they termed a new model - the "Sam Elite". However it was simply a Sam Coupe with a built in printer interface, a tweaked ROM, and sticky labels covering the old Sam Coupe logo on the case; in all honesty a bit of a bodge. The name Sam Elite never caught on and they were just referred to as Sam Coupes.

West Coast carried on manufacturing the Sam until it came to an abrupt stop in early 1999 when its operator, Bob Brenchley, disappeared along with 'Format', the Sam & Spectrum magazine that he also produced.

That year also saw just about every other Sam company shut down operations and disappearing, more often than not leaving customers out of pocket for subscriptions and pre-orders of unfinished products.

It would appear to the outside world that it was a very bleak time for the Sam Coupe. However, there has always been a dedicated hardcore of Sam enthusiasts who knew other people would support the machine. After all, the user base had already been through so many problems and still the machine had survived over a decade.

And one Sam company, called Quazar, kept the home fires burning, and aimed to keep the scene alive...



THE SCIENCE BIT

Processor

Zilog Z80 processor, 6MHz
Due to memory contention for the display, the effective speed is approximately 4.8MHz with the screen on)

Memory

512K upgradable to 4Mb. 1989-1990 Sams were also sold with only 256K

Graphics

MODE 1 - 256 x 192, 16 colour, with 8x8 Attributes (to match the ZX Spectrum).
MODE 2 - 256 x 192, 16 colour, with 8x1 Attributes
MODE 3 - 512 x 192, 4 colour
MODE 4 - 256 x 192, 16 colour
Total palette available: 128 colours.

Sound

Philips SAA1099 soundchip, giving stereo 6 channel FM sound with 2 noise generators.

Other

- + One or two internal Double Density Disk drives, formatting disks to 800K with standard DOS, although up to 880K possible.
- + Sam BASIC, in ROM, written by Dr Andrew Wright (author of BetaBASIC and BetaDOS on the ZX Spectrum)
- + Power In with Composite Video out for RF Modulator.
- + Full SCART socket, with both Composite and RGB out.
- + Light Pen / Audio out.
- + MIDI In and MIDI Out sockets (with MIDI through by means of a software switch), which could also act to give the Sam limited machine to machine network capabilities.
- + Mouse port
- + Joystick port
- + 64-way Euroconnector which gives access to the full CPU bus for external peripherals.
- + External power supply, 5v @ 2A, 12V @ 200mA, RF modulator built in.

8BIT GRAPHICS

How do the Sam Coupe graphics compare to other 8 bit micros? Lemmings - as it is available on just about every platform is an ideal candidate to compare the graphical capabilities. The Sam version of Lemmings was written by Chris White and released in 1993, and it used the graphics from the 16 bit versions.



Above | The SAM Coupe Lemmings game



Above | The ZX Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad versions of Lemmings

SAM GAMING

Often you will see people list 'top Sam games' and only show the common 'big name games' that were launched in the very early years of the Sam's life, such as Prince of Persia and Manic Miner. But there have been so many original games for the Sam Coupe which are just as important albeit far less well known outside the Sam scene. Here's a handful...



Above | Original SAM games

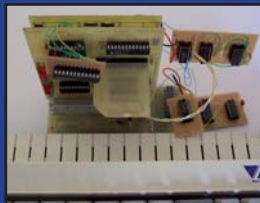
A very small example of some of the original games that adjoined the Sam, clockwise from the top we have Amalthea, Conquest, Waterworks and Stratosphere.

KEEPING THE SAM SCENE ALIVE

The original manufacturers may have called it a day, but one man is still developing hardware and software for the 8-bit wonder, Colin Piggott tells all.



Chrome | 3D Wizardry
A work-in-progress FPS for the Sam.



The Mayhem Accelerator | Yikes!
This bundle of wires and boards is the prototype accelerator, which will soon enable the Sam to speed along at 20MHz.



Sam in a Can | The 8-bit Reborn
The internal workings of the canned version of the Sam - a neatly packaged, upgraded Sam in a desktop case.

Quazar Surround | Audio Gubbins
The Quazar Surround enables surround sound on the Sam; something that was relatively unheard of at the time. (Inset - the prototype)



The Sam Coupe is a true gem of an 8-bit home computer. Over the last eleven years I have been heavily involved with designing hardware and software for the Sam Coupe and single handedly running 'Quazar', the last Sam company that is still going.

Although I had followed the progress of the Sam through magazine articles in its early years I was a bit of a latecomer to the scene and purchased my first Sam from Blue Alpha Electronics in April 1993. Having previously owned a ZX Spectrum I was quite amazed by what the Sam could do, and within weeks I was tinkering away in BASIC writing a few small games and utilities that were later published on 'Fred', one of the mainstream magazine disks at the time. The following year I wrote a disk recovery utility that was commercially published, and I also delved into learning and mastering the art of programming in Z80 assembly language; all the time my interest and passion was growing for the Sam Coupe.

It was around then I decided I had to start up and go it alone with my own company, 'Quazar', for my Sam projects as I had a few ideas on the go. At the 4th Sam & Spectrum show held in

ter in April 1995 I publicly unveiled my first piece of Sam hardware - the 'Quazar Surround' soundcard.

Computer music had always fascinated me, particularly how sound could be stored and played back. I had heard samples on other computers such as Apple Macs and Amigas and felt the Sam should have sound to match. The Quazar Surround took a few days to design and the prototype was built over a couple of weeks in December '94 and January '95 and to hear it playing its first samples was quite exciting.

I tried to incorporate the best features I could think of into the design such as making it multichannel to allow many sounds to play at once, and to be able to play back 16-bit quality samples to match the latest PC soundcards at the time. From the outset I had also decided to make it support 4 speakers to give it full surround sound capabilities - it really is quite impressive when you can hear the sound all around you, and at the time this was really unheard of on soundcards, let alone on an 8-bit computer.

Up until then the Sam had been limited in terms of sample playback, the SAA1099 could be used to play back low quality 4 bit samples, and the Blue Alpha sound sampler gave just one eight bit sound channel and only had a short release back in 1992 and was no longer available.

I knew that software support was to be the key to success with the Quazar Surround, so I also launched Soundbyte, a regular monthly disk with games, utilities and demos all specifically for the Quazar Surround soundcard. It paid off, creating a wealth of software support and featured programs and music from other

coders as well. I produced seventy-six issues of Soundbyte over the years, with it taking a sabbatical in 2004 so I could concentrate on other projects, but I am sure I will be resurrecting it again for a few more issues with fresh material sometime in the future.

Although the Quazar Surround has always been seen as my flagship product, I did deviate away from the sound orientated software too. In 1997, I spent eleven months writing 'Stratosphere', a game to push the Sam to its limits, featuring fast 3D wireframe graphics in full Mode 4 graphics.

Up until then the only wireframe game on the Sam was a port of the ZX Spectrum version of 'Elite' from Revelation software. To put it simply it was a snapshot of Elite running under spectrum emulation, but patched to save and load from the disk drive. For that fact, and the hefty price tag of £15, it received dreadful reviews. Anyone who wanted to play Elite would just load a Spectrum snapshot or tape into a Spectrum emulator instead of paying through the nose for the privilege. I felt Stratosphere was a chance to show what the Sam could do, and to say I was pleased with the results would be an understatement when Stratosphere went on to receive rave reviews.

It was quite disheartening when elsewhere all went quiet in 1999, with all the other Sam companies and West Coast Computers vanishing or shutting up shop. The only dedicated Sam publication left going was 'Sam Community', a paper based fanzine produced by Gavin Smith, a very keen Sam user in Northern Ireland, but that too stopped in late 2000. I had decided to keep Quazar going as there was still a demand for the Quazar Surround. I was still releasing Soundbyte regularly and there was still demand for Stratosphere and my other games.

With the demand for Sam products, I was often getting requests for the availability for upgrades such as disk drives and memory upgrades so that kick started some fresh hardware development in 2001 and I was able to offer new disk drives and other standard upgrades for the Sam. It seemed as if the interest in the Sam was slowly, but surely, returning.

In 2002, the Sam scene was getting livelier; I designed and released several new pieces of hardware that year including a mouse interface and a PC Keyboard interface - the latter to connect a PS/2 keyboard to the Sam as replacement keyboard membranes had not been available since

THE Mayhem Accelerator is currently running at 16MHz making the Sam run at approximately 303% speed

OLD SCHOOL EMULATION ON THE SAM

Centre | 8-bit Emulation

The Sam is powerful enough to emulate a number of its fellow 8-bit home computers, and even basic arcade games using the original ROMs.

From left to right

Pacman arcade ROM | The first step towards arcade emulation.

Jupiter Ace | This machine was considered retro even before the Sam was released

Spectrum 128k | Bedroom coders were able to improve the Spectrum emulation to enable 128k games to be run.

ZX81 | Another classic computer; emulated with ease by the Sam.

Dubbed by the press as merely a 'super Spectrum' the Sam Coupe has had to live with that stigma since day one due to it being able to emulate the ZX Spectrum, and unfortunately it is still often only seen as that to this day despite it being a complete and powerful 8-bit system in its own right.

Though Spectrum compatibility caused the Sam some image problems, emulation was initially seen as an important factor in the hope of seeing Spectrum users upgrade to a Sam instead of the Atari ST or Amiga which were beginning to dominate the home computer scene at the time. However, emulation is still something that has been expanded upon over

the years with a number of new emulators being written.

Although the original emulator supplied by MGT could only emulate approximately 60% of 48K Spectrum games it didn't take long for freeware emulators to appear that used an image of the ZX Spectrum ROM to allow near perfect 100% compatibility. Although 128K emulation was never planned by MGT that didn't put a dampner on hackers who produced countless patches for 128K games to allow them to run on the Sam, complete with routines to emulate the 128k's AY soundchip using the Sam's SAA1099.

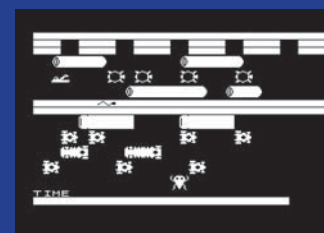
Since then, further emulators of older 8-bit were released. First there was the ZX81 emulator, followed by a Jupiter Ace emulator written only last year by Edwin Blink.

An emulator written by Simon Owen allows the Sam to emulate the Pac-Man arcade machine on the Sam using the arcade ROMs - that's right, think MAME on the Sam. It's hoped that a few other early arcade machine that used Z80 processors should be

able to be emulated on the Sam, especially once it has the extra speed using the Mayhem Accelerator.

It doesn't stop there though. All of the emulated systems featured here all used the Z80 which makes things a bit easier, but Simon Owen has also written a MOS6510 emulator which emulates the Commodore 64's processor (at about half the speed of the C64). This was written initially to run the machine code in 'sid' music files and play them directly on the Sam through the SID Soundchip interface, without having to convert the music to a different format beforehand. This is to my knowledge the first time an 8-bit micro has emulated a different 8-bit processor.

With the Mayhem Accelerator, there would be ample CPU time to emulate the 6510 processor at full C64 speed, possibly with time left over to emulate the graphics side of it; so there is a good chance a limited C64 emulator could be written for the Sam Coupe paving the way for other emulated 6502/6510 systems in the future.



the demise of West Coast computers three years previously.

It was also in 2002 I took the plunge to start my own Sam magazine - 'Sam Revival' - to fill the void left when all the old Sam publications stopped. Issue 1 was a 44-page paper magazine that launched in August and it went down a storm, bringing news of what I had been doing along with a varied mix of articles and reviews from a handful of contributors I had invited to write for the magazine. Sam Revival lived up to its name - it seemed to kick-start a whole revival of interest in the Sam.

With no slowing in my enthusiasm for the Sam I went on to design and release more hardware in 2003. The most interesting was a piece designed for my own curiosity's sake and my interest with computer music. I had decided to take the famous 'SID' sound chip from the Commodore 64 and get it working with the Sam.

To meet requests asking where you could obtain a Sam I also began to recondition and stock Sam Coupe computers themselves and now usually have several in stock, along with a limited range of early hardware and software titles. From this also stemmed the infamous 'Sam in a Can'. This was again something I built for myself but users soon began to en-

quire about it. Essentially, it involves taking an original Sam motherboard and fitting it inside a new aluminium case along with a pile of Sam peripherals! Expensive to build, but it gives the ultimate Sam Coupe setup in one case.

Sam Revival has gone from strength to strength in both content and readership; I expanded the scope of the magazine from issue 9 when I started to include a cover disk with the magazine that featured a range of both old and new software. There have been brand new games as well as old classics - including the Sam version of Manic Miner for which I had obtained distribution rights from the copyright holder. I know many retro fans are into Manic Miner - if you have never played the Sam Coupe version then you are missing out, as well as the 20 original caverns there are an additional 40 new screens in the Sam version.

There is a lot more in store for the future. I am working hard at several new projects at the moment. Software-wise I am in the process of revamping a couple of classic Sam games and also going through a lot of unreleased games to which I now own the rights. It has been fairly time consuming as it is quite a drawn out process giving them a fresh lick

of paint and making sure they are finished off to high standards. I've also got one of my own games still on the backburner including a Doom style shooter called 'Chrome' which I originally started initial work on about five years ago.

However the largest project I have on the go is the 'Mayhem Accelerator' which, to put it simply, accelerates the Sam. As mentioned earlier the Sam runs at 6MHz clock speed, or when the screen is on it is effectively 4.8MHz due to the contention memory (the CPU has to wait when the ASIC accesses the memory to generate the display).

The prototype Mayhem Accelerator is currently running at 16MHz making the Sam run at approximately 303% speed. And this is only the prototype - there is still some extra circuitry to add to refine the timing further, and to allow it to achieve its full speed of 20MHz. All going well I will be launching the Mayhem later this year.

For more information and updates on recent developments take a look at the Quazar website at www.samcoupe.com

Below | SID interface
Gene-splicing between 8 bit computers... a step in the right direction with the SID Interface, allowing the Sam Coupé to use the infamous SID soundchip from the Commodore 64



An Interview With ROB HUBBARD



The debate of which computer was best took up as much time in the 1980's heyday of the Spectrum, Commodore 64 and Amstrad as was spent playing the games. All machines had their strengths – but tell that to a 13 year old Spectrum crazed, Clive Sinclair worshipping Welsh boy.

Oh I wasn't biased towards the Spectrum, what on earth gave you that idea. It was the computer I had, I wasn't getting another one and so I gave my beloved Speccy my all.

I heard continuous slanderous remarks from school friends that the Commodore 64 had much better graphics and sound than the Spectrum but I dismissed these comments thinking that they were jealous of my rubber keyed marvel.

That was until a friend powered up a game called Sanxion on his beige, 1st generation C64 on visiting his house one evening. The music that played as the game loaded was absolutely awesome. The game itself was ok, but it was the multi-channel music that struck a chord (pun intended) with me. And so it was with other games that I was introduced to on the '64 and so love with the SID chip had began even though I never actually owned my own Commodore 64 until much later on.

The compositions I tended to like were invariably by the same Authors - David Whittaker, Martin Galway and Ben Daglish to name but a few. But it was the writer of the Sanxion loading tune, my first SID tune experience, who soon became my favourite C64 musician, the legendary Rob Hubbard.

I caught up with Rob at The Retro Ball charity event before Christmas and interviewed one of my game music heroes:

Retro Fusion:

Nostalgia - what does the word mean to you?

RH: Nostalgia is defined as 'describes a longing for the past, often idealized and unrealistic', which really doesn't fit my definition. For me it's a more of fond memories of a happy and very creative period. And also something that could never happen

again.

RF: Talk us through how you would develop a soundtrack to a game, say Sanxion (my favourite) - where did the inspiration come from for the tune?

RH: I wrote the bass and drums part for Sanxion then added the melody part. I really didn't like it very much after I did it, but later on I started to like it. I wrote most of the tunes on a keyboard first and sketched ideas on paper as quickly as possible so that I didn't forget them.

RF: What tools did u use?

RH: I used an assembler program and typed everything in as source code .BYTE statements in hex and the whole tune took a couple of days to do from start to finish.

RF: When did you decide that what you had done was good enough?

RH: Since it was a loading tune, I figured that after the solo section then it was probably long enough.

RF: Did you ever follow up gamers/magazine reaction to the tune you just wrote?

RH: I did on the very first games, but later on I didn't because I was really busy with work, and didn't have any spare time.

RF: At the time, was there any rivalry between you and other composers? If so, is that rivalry still there?

RH: I don't think rivalry is the right word. Many of us were good friends and used to help each other out as well as talk about music or programming ideas. We all had plenty of work to go round.

RF: How did you find the transition from the 8-bit computers to 16-bit?

RH: It was a natural progression. The 68000 was fun to write for and a leap forward. Better chips started to appear and PC sound cards - although that made doing audio for PC games a nightmare. The Sega machine was still fun though - one piece of hardware!

RF: Back then each game had some large text saying "Music By..." that made the musicians celebrities of the time - these days game sound

'people' get a mention in the small print that you have to go looking for - which time do you prefer - then or now and explain why?

RH: It was more exciting back then of course. These days there are huge teams of people doing games, and so any one person is a small cog in the wheel. Back then there was only 2 or 3 people doing the entire game, and so the individuals were very important. Programmers and artists were also better credited and known back then.

RF: Did you mind at the time that the tune you were writing was the music for a dire game?

RH: No - I was getting paid, so still had to do the job.

RF: Did you see the games you were writing the music for?

RH: Yes, sometimes I did. Either through a demo disc or sometimes I would visit the company or programmer. The game had to provide me with some sort of inspiration.

RF: Are you still involved with music?

RH: Yes - I'm still doing many music activities and jobs.

Thanks very much for taking the time to talk to us Rob - see you at the next event!!

TOP 5 HUBBARD TUNES:

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	Title
1	-	Sanxion
2	-	Spellbound
3	-	Rasputin
4	-	Human Race
5	-	Ace 2

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UNOFFICIAL GUIDE To The Classic...

HORACE GOES SKIING



Above | **Hit The Slopes**
Keep within the flags and avoid the Trees of Death! It's basic stuff but we loved it at the time.

Below | **A ZX Hero**
Not much more than a blue blob with legs, Horace remains one of the best known heroes of the 8 bit era.

The first thing that greets you on loading this game is the acid-casualty intro screen - bypass this as quickly as possible, for your own safety.

You should now be looking at a bizarre amorphous blob... thing, stood on one side of an extremely busy road. Don't worry that you appear to be a green amorphous blob when the loading screen clearly showed a blue amorphous blob; due to a rare and exciting skin condition you can only become blue when you put your skis on. Speaking of which, you may notice that the bottom of the screen contains a small shed-like structure. This is the ski shop. It is your goal, your aim and, for the next few minutes, your all-consuming purpose in life. You MUST get to the ski shop, I cannot stress how important this is. Focus upon the ski shop. Be as one with the ski shop.

Sadly, there is only one way to reach the ski shop. It involves a mad

dash across multiple traffic lanes of fast-moving potential death. You might be tempted to wonder why Horace doesn't look for a bridge or something. Well, he can't.

4. The stopping-playing-and-doing-something-worthwhile-with-your-life

There comes a time in everyone's life where this strategy is of paramount importance.

Since you've just started playing, I would strongly recommend strategy number 1. After a few hours, you might want to switch to number 4.

Horace doesn't have lives, he has cash. Every time you're minced by a hit-and-run driver an ambulance will arrive to whisk you away to a curiously cheap hospital, where the seriousness of your injury is rendered strangely irrelevant. So long as you can pay your way, you will be completely healed.

2. The delicate flower

This isn't so much a strategy, it's more a poor method of play. The primary features are spending far too long waiting for traffic to clear, spotting something of a gap and taking a first tentative step into the road. Whereupon the magnitude of the situation strikes firmly home, leading to sudden panic and swift death.

3. The YES.. NO... Y.. NO.. NO NO, GO BACK, GO.. YES, YES! .. no:

There's a gap! Wait, no! Arrggh, get back to the safety of the roadside! Quick, quick, there's another gap! Yes, yes.. lane two, lane two! Nnngh, look

dash across multiple traffic lanes of fast-moving potential death. You might be tempted to wonder why Horace doesn't look for a bridge or something. Well, he can't.

There are a number of road-crossing strategies available to you. Unfortunately, they are all equally terrible. Choose your favourite.

1. The headless chicken

Horace doesn't seem to have a head anyway, so this is aptly named. Or maybe he's ALL head.. it's not really clear. Anyway, as you can imagine this method involves carefully picking a moment when traffic looks slightly less insane than normal and pegging it across the road as fast as your freakish green legs will carry you. You may wish to close your eyes or utter some kind of defiant war-cry at this point, it could all help.

out! Back, back, back! This method has two possible results. Either you'll find yourself at the top of the screen again, or splattered across the road-surface.

4. The stopping-playing-and-doing-something-worthwhile-with-your-life

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If the gods are with you, there's a slim chance that you'll make it to the ski shop. Hope you've got some cash left because you need to pay for those skis. The skis cost exactly the same amount as the magically healing medical attention, which leads me to believe that either the healthcare is an amazing bargain or that the skis cost an absolute bomb. Try not to dwell on this too long though, because you have a much greater task ahead.

Yeah, you've got to get back

across the road. Unlucky.

Some trippy, multicoloured, concentric squares will try to freak you out while the ski part loads up. Don't let it get to you; rise above these devious Spectrum mind-games! You will be rewarded with your first proper glimpse of those snowy peaks. Yes, this really is what you've been striving for. Try not to be too disappointed. On the bright side, you will notice that Horace has reverted to his usual blue self. I think he looks a little happier now.

Let's take in the scenery.. such as it is.

Freakish blue blob on skis: That'd be you, then.

Flags: The 'skiing' of the title refers to slalom of some kind. Therefore, these flags are your friends. Try to drag Horace's big blue arse in between them in order to get points

and feel good about yourself. These 'points' are pretty much the only incentive for playing the game, so you'd better start lying to yourself now about how important they are.

Crudely drawn seagulls: Suspend your disbelief, because you're going to have to come to terms with these things actually being 'jumps' of some kind. Not much happens when you go over them though, other than a weird beepy sound effect. This is possibly to symbolise a last dying breath from the seagull. You'd think they would have frozen already though, what with sleeping in the snow and all. Feel free to go on a seagull-massacre-rampage, or ignore them completely. It really makes no difference.

Trees OF DEATH: Avoid these like crazy. Crashing into one will result in a blast of crazy static-feedback straight out of a Jesus and Mary Chain album.

As if that wasn't scary enough, Horace morphs into a flashing MASK OF HORROR. His last terrifying moments captured forever in a short animated tribute to Sonny Bono. And it's all your fault. Not only did you kill Horace, LOOK HOW MUCH HE SUFFERED! It's genuinely unsettling stuff. Strangely though, whether you get to play on or not depends upon whether the game decides that your skis have been broken by your recent face-to-tree interfacing session. If you're unlucky, it's back to the road with you.

The big finishline banner thingy:

Successfully weave your way around the DEADLY TREES for long enough and you'll get to see this. Try to zoom under it for extra points.

Congratulations! Now you can return to the road-crossing screen and do it all again until Horace runs out of cash.

Yes, really.



Above & Below | **Packaging**
The inlay cards conformed to the standard Sinclair packaging of the time.



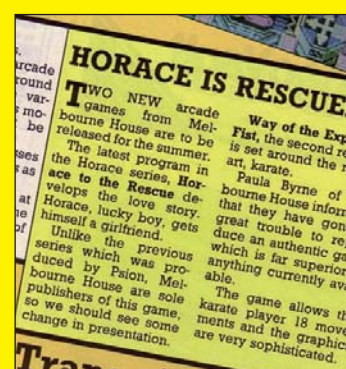
A BRIEF HISTORY OF HORACE



Top | **Park Havoc**
Steal the guards' lunches and trample the flowers in Horace's first adventure.

Middle | **Spiders!**
Making full use of the Spectrum palette, the Horace games were almost enough to make your eyes bleed.

Right | **Rescued?**
A small news item from Sinclair Programs. Horace in love? I bet his girlfriend was a bit of a looker.



A clone of Pacman, Hungry Horace was the first outing of William Tang's blue blob way back in 1982 on the Beam Software / Psion / Melbourne House labels, available on the ZX Spectrum and C64 platforms. In the first of four adventures (the last - Horace To The Rescue - not actually being released) Horace found himself in a park gathering food whilst avoiding the park guards. Collecting the sporadically placed bells would render the guards vulnerable, just like the effect the power pills had on the lovable yellow pizza in the original game. Unlike Pacman, you didn't have to collect all the food to be able to progress to the next level, just get to the exit, something in itself a pretty much impossible task after level 5. As an extra added bonus Hungry Horace came with a level designer, although I doubt if anyone ever used it, much was the way the main game left you after 10 minutes.

A few months later and our little blue blob was on the piste in the uniquely named Horace Goes Skiing. A cross between Frogger and Eddie The Eagle, Horace has to initially navigate a rather busy road, get his skis from the shop and then get back across the road before tackling a rather daunting ski course. Released under the same labels and machines as the original game, Horace Goes Skiing was not a direct sequel to the first game, but was more of a spin-off. Horace starts the game with \$40 (four lives to you and me) which is depleted by \$10 each time he gets mowed down by a passing vehicle on his mission to cross the road. Why does it cost \$10 I hear you all ask? It's the fee

for the ambulance to take him away and patch him up I tell you. Novel if nothing else. Grab your Skis from the shop, return over the road unscathed and then the real fun starts. Control Horace as he has to navigate between red and blue flags without hitting the trees and get to the bottom in one piece. Your reward? Back to the beginning for more of the same albeit with a slightly harder difficulty setting.

The third and final game of those released in the Horace range greeted us in 1983 titled Horace And The Spiders. A ZX Spectrum only game needing 48K to play, Horace found himself trying to get over his arachnophobia by jumping over spiders whilst climbing a hill, swinging on spider thread to cross a bridge and making holes in a web so that the little critters would fall down them just so that the blue blob could get his serum home safely. Why? I have no idea, but if Horace is touched by a spider at any point during his travels it's back to the start again. Using the same sprites as the previous two games, this outing had a little more to it in terms of playability and was arguably the best of the three.

After a bout of alleged illness (Tang, not Horace), the fourth game Horace to the Rescue was canned with his only other appearance being in the 1987 ZX Spectrum / C64 game Inspector Gadget and The Circus Of Fear where H had a small yet perfectly formed cameo. Ironically, a few people in the remake scene have made quite wonderful clones of the original games which you should check out if you get a chance.

I HATE YOU

Veteran of the industry, Chris Abbott, remembers when this were nowt but fields

I hate you. You smell. I hate you more than the Amiga conversion of Wizball. I hate you more than that game that got 2% in Zzap!64. I've never met you, and yet I know that you have the hygiene of a baboon.

If you haven't already set off for my house bearing a big baseball bat, let me explain why I did that.

There's a rule in journalism that's pretty basic. Don't insult your readers. Especially, don't accuse them of having the cleanliness of jungle animals. It's just not nice.

And yet, by breaking that rule, I got you to read this far, even though the article has very little relevance to the magazine it's in.

Trust me, I'm going somewhere with this.

Did you know Matthew Broderick was 56 when he made "War Games"? Who knew? If that film taught me anything, it was: "sometimes the only way to win is not to play". However, that doesn't make for an interesting life, unless you really like avoiding tic-tac-toe games as a hobby.

I prefer another maxim, which is more Kirk-like: "Sometimes, the only way to win is to change the rules". Or make the rules.

A chance remark in a review of "Back in Time Lite" in Manchester bought into focus why it was that I was so keen on C64 music, C64 games, and the general music of the 80s era.

The people I respect from that era changed the rules. Some of them made the rules. Jeff Minter, Andrew Braybrook, Rob Hubbard, Martin Galway, Fred Gray, Ben Daglish, Jon Hare and Chris Yates, Archer Maclean, Matthew Smith, Ultimate Play the Game... the usual suspects, in other words.

Sometimes the games, or indeed the music, wasn't as good as it was perceived at the time. But the attraction for me was that it was rebelling.

It was techno-punk for the creative introvert. It presented a lifestyle that was achievable. We had the same machines as the guys we revered. What was stopping us?

Well, of course, skill, experience and time were all lacking, but hey, you only have to look at X-Factor to realise just how easy it is to delude yourself you have talent. For instance, your singing voice sounds like one of Archer Maclean's cars in a pile-up. Oh, hang on, I stopped insulting you didn't I?

Anyway, 80s computers were my generations punk. The Ferris Bueller generation. It took a certain kind of mindset to get into it, just as it took a certain mindset to prefer the Sex Pistols over, say, the reversed sound of the garrotting of five thousand rabbits recorded by John Lennon to upset Paul McCartney (hey, this was 1979, things were rough).

Of course, something like SID music, or gameplay like Wizball, was alien to ears and eyes less impressionable than ours. That added to the mystique. I think it still does. After all this time, my attempts to convert people to SID-dom generally end in "ooh, it's blip-blop music". Which is grossly unfair to it, but it's such an entrenched position, even something as groundbreaking as my own "Crystal Dreamscapes" album, fails to dislodge the prejudice.

Today's music is boring. Today's films are mediocre. Today's personalities are anodyne. It's not because they're crap, so much as they play by the rules. Back in the 1980s, there were no rules about how Computer music was meant to be. The genres were fluid. Anyone had a chance of changing the rules to suit themselves and beating the system. Every issue of Zzap!64, someone changed the rules. Personalities were more important than the software houses that hired them. They named their price, and it

was paid.

God, I miss those days. So I try to recreate them. But I only have limited success. Why?

Because it's impossible to convey the excitement I have to get it into people who weren't there. The most we can do is try to break a rule here and there, or subvert some rule and have a giggle. But the money required to change the world is a lot more than it used to be.

Back then, a maverick could beat the system, and the system was worth beating. These days, the system itself is a load of sh*t. In the 80s, the top ten meant something. In the 80s, record companies were proper record companies. Now a Maverick can go his own way and stick two fingers up at the system: but the system is so complicated now that there's no way you can achieve anything like your goals.

There are more TV channels. There are more newspapers. The big record companies have become meaner, more conservative and more frightened.

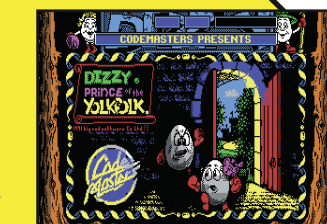
The alternative is scraping a living selling through a dirt-poor indie label, where even success is measured in hundreds rather than thousands of copies of something. Or uploading your tune into a download-sale space that's got millions of tracks in it.

It's even worse in games. Developing for minor platforms with a dubious revenue share and so much competition it hurts. Every man and his dog thinking he can program or do music.

The world sucks. Go be with your family and be happy. It's the only thing that really counts.

When he's not turning purple in a violent rage, Chris Abbott is also available for childrens' parties. More next issue - Ed

Exclusive



The Wikipedia

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page) entry for Dizzy states succinctly:

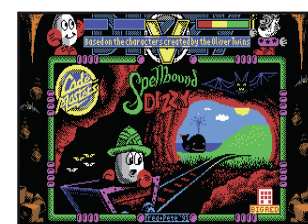
"The gameplay involves collecting items and moving to other locations where the item is required...[and] features a very large number of hazards that impede your progress." This might not sound like a hugely

We were trying to show real expression in the character so that people were engaged by him so we thought the face was important, but we only had 8 pixels by 8 pixels to draw the face. One morning we were playing around with how big we could get the face on the character, but obviously to do that meant having no body. So

realised that if we used references from classic stories such as fairy tales we could create a compelling and original world that would also be familiar in some way for the player. We also wanted to use these ideas in a way that would create some more unusual gameplay elements (instead of just the usual 'find key to open door' type of dynamic). We wanted to create fantasy situations that kids would know and recognize, so we copied ideas from the popular stories that children would know. Interestingly, Shrek uses the same formula of familiarity.

The first game was written in two months and featured Dizzy battling numerous hazards and obstacles to overcome the evil wizard Zaks. Zaks turned out to be quite tricky to kill; he popped up again in most of the subsequent games, while in the third outing, Fantasy World Dizzy, our hero has help from some of the Yolkfolk he rescued in Treasure Island Dizzy (the second installment).

DIZZY FAN LETTERS OUTWEIGH THOSE FOR ALL THE OTHER CODEMASTERS GAMES



promising basis for a game, even back in 1986, but that simple formula went on to become what is sometimes claimed to be the most played series of games on the ZX Spectrum, ever. This just might be because, as Games™ magazine said, "Simple in concept and design, the Dizzy games offer just about everything you could ever wish for from a platform game."

And of course, the Dizzy games have Dizzy – an animated egg-shaped creature (not actually an egg, despite the profusion of groan-inducing egg-related jokes that became a feature of the series). Dizzy's bouncing movement and permanent grin endeared him to gamers of all ages, which was always our intention.

fundamentally we just drew the biggest face we could get on a character, and then put arms and legs on it so it actually held together and you could run it around the screen. This actually only took a morning to do all the animations and we can still remember it vividly.

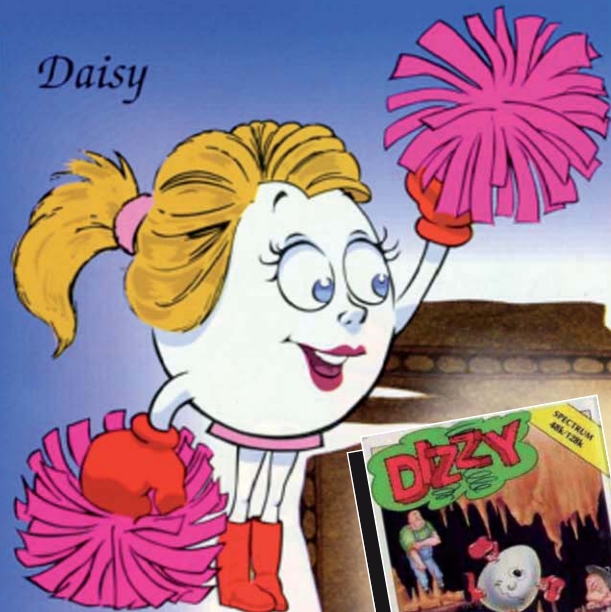
The other thing we wanted to do with Dizzy was to create an interactive cartoon, so we needed other characters and we needed an interesting world. We

EXCLUSIVE:
BY ANDREW OLIVER



Today's music is boring. Today's films are mediocre. Today's personalities are anodyne. It's not because they're crap, so much as they play by the rules.

Daisy



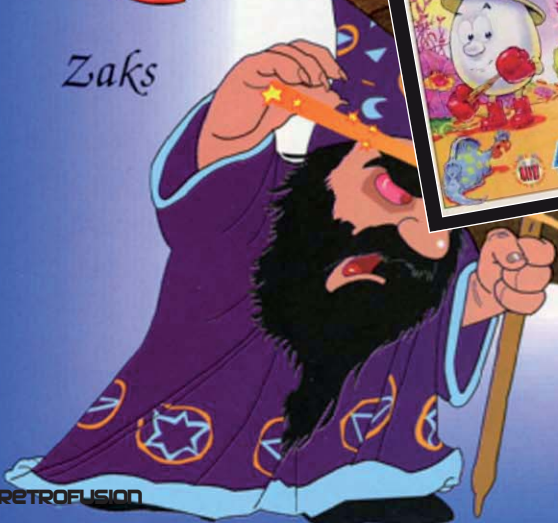
Dozy



Grand Dizzy



Zaks



Dizzy: the Ultimate Cartoon Adventure was actually quite a slow seller.

Although our earlier game 'Super Robin Hood' had been a great success, that was at least partly because Robin Hood was, well, Robin Hood - a familiar folk hero. As yet, nobody knew who Dizzy was, but this began to change rapidly as the fan mail poured into the Codemasters offices. As I said in an interview in 1991,

"Dizzy fan letters outweigh those for all the other Codemasters games put together."

It was as a result of the fan mail and the overwhelmingly positive feedback that the game was getting in general, rather than sales, that we decided to produce another Dizzy game.

This was Treasure Island Dizzy and this is where the Dizzy phenomenon really took off. Whilst it had taken 6 months to sell 100,000 of the original game, the sequel sold maybe the same amount in the first few weeks.

We believe that what happened was that everyone who had bought the first Dizzy game liked it so much that the minute they saw another one, they went straight down the shops and bought it. As a result of this huge surge, it went straight to Number One and those people who hadn't learnt of Dizzy, saw that it was in the top slot and purchased it on that recommendation.

The sales continued, keeping Treasure Island Dizzy in the charts for over two years and selling more than 250,000 copies. In these days of multi-million dollar projects involving tens if not hundreds of development staff, it's incredible to think that it took the two of us roughly a month to create the first Dizzy sequel!

Not only were the Yolkfolk first mentioned in Treasure Island Dizzy, Dizzy could now collect hidden

coins and carry multiple objects. Plus there were new environments; if you found the snorkel, you could take Dizzy underwater to find sunken wrecks and fight off aggressive sea beasts.

Also appearing in 1987 was the first in a series of Dizzy-themed action games, Fast Food. For the most part these were fun experiments with various different gaming genres, but they lacked the entertaining narrative and the gameplay scope of the main series.

In the next instalment, Fantasy World Dizzy, the players finally got to meet the Yolkfolk. We'd already introduced enemy characters and we decided we needed to introduce some friendly characters. One of the original inspirations was the Smurfs and they had their little village and family and friends, so we wanted to create something similar.

Dizzy was the main character of all the games and the character that the player controlled. Like all the Yolkfolk, Dizzy appeared to be an egg with boxing gloves, and had no identifying features apart from his smile.

Mainly identified by her hair (she had some), Daisy was Dizzy's unlucky girlfriend, always threatened by some dreadful fate from which Dizzy would have to rescue her. Daisy was a cross between Daphne from 'Scooby Doo' and Daisy Duke from 'The Dukes of Hazzard'. Denzil always wore a Walkman and shades and as befits a character based on 'Happy Days' the Fonz, was the coolest of the Yolkfolk.

Dozy was almost always asleep, often trailing



Pogie the Fluffle



Dizzy

floating ZZZZs to indicate this. We feel he probably owes more than a little to certain Dwarf...

Dylan's origins are fairly clear-cut, being a cross between the eponymous rabbit from 'Magic Roundabout' and Neil from 'The Young Ones'. True to his name, he was a hippy and deeply interested in nature. Dylan's identifying feature was his hat.

Inspired by Grandad from 'Only Fools and Horses', Grand Dizzy was an elder of the Yolkfolk and also Dizzy's grandfather. He started out with a moustache but later shaved it off and just had a walking stick.

The Shopkeeper, another memorable character, was a cross between the Shop Keeper in 'Mr Benn', and Ronnie Barker's Arkwright from 'Open All Hours'.

Finally, late addition Dora, Dizzy's sister, had a bow in her hair and was based on Velma, the smart intellectual from 'Scooby Doo'.

Fantasy World Dizzy was followed in 1990 by Magicland Dizzy, again published by Codemasters for Amstrad, Spectrum, DOS and Amiga. This was the first Dizzy game that we didn't develop, instead handing the creation over to Big Red Software. Magicland Dizzy was additionally promoted by a five screen mini-adventure for ZX Spectrum only, given away with the January 1991

edition of Crash magazine. Into

Magiland was a prequel to the main game and stars Dizzy and his cousin Danny.

We're sometimes asked why all the names start with D, and the answer is that initially, we had loads of names. Obviously we had Dizzy himself and then we really liked Denzil and Dylan; in the end we agreed that it just felt like a nice family set to have them all starting with D.

And here our direct involvement with the Dizzy series pretty much comes to an end. Big Red continued to develop the later games in the series - Spellbound Dizzy, Dizzy Prince of the Yolkfolk, Fantastic Dizzy and Crystal Kingdom Dizzy. We were very friendly with Big Red (who incidentally we now employ most of!) and we had a lot of respect for the work that they were doing on their games, so we were happy for them to take Dizzy on when they asked us about the idea. The main reason though was that we were starting to develop for the NES, for which we wrote Fantastic Dizzy. We didn't have the time to work on everything, so we decided to let Big Red do the Spectrum games while we concentrated on the new console.

We worked together on the storyline for Spellbound Dizzy, and the result was very satisfactory; so the design for Dizzy Prince of the Yolkfolk was pretty much entirely Big Red's own work. We were exceptionally pleased with the result because it really captured the full essence of what we'd been trying to achieve with Dizzy - in some ways, it did it better than our own games had done up to that point.

Ultimately though, with the

Dora



Denzil



Dylan



Theodore the good wizard



FANTASTIC DIZZY

Codemasters™

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rise of 3D graphics, the cost of making Dizzy games went up and the series' popularity was starting to fade, so it no longer made economic sense to make the games. Codemasters released The Excellent Dizzy Collection in November 1993, featuring Dizzy the Adventurer, Panic Dizzy and Go! Dizzy Go! and no further games were released after that.

Philip and I left Codemasters to work with some of the strong console publishers in America. The Dizzy intellectual property rights were split between us, and although both Codemasters and ourselves have often said we'd like to revisit the series, the time has never been quite right. Both Dreamworld Pogie and the final Dizzy game, Wonderland Dizzy, remain unpublished.

We do still get a lot of interest from Dizzy fans, however, and it's clear that many people would welcome another outing for the little character. Partly as a pitch to raise the necessary finances, we recently worked up a 'how might Dizzy look now?' trailer, which can be seen on www.fantasticdizzy.co.uk.

As for how a new adventure might look and feel, we feel that the Shrek movies completely captured the personality, storyline and imagery that we had always dreamt of but were unable to achieve with the technology we had at the time; so I guess that's the kind of direction that any new Dizzy games would probably go in. There's been a lot of interest in people wanting to play the original Dizzy games on some of the handheld formats recently so maybe he'll make a new appearance on mobile phones or somewhere similar at some point.

We think (and we may be wrong) that Dizzy continues to appeal because it conjured up a great deal of imagination in people's minds and this was unusual at the time it was first released. If you look at most of the Spectrum and 8 bit games, what

was on screen didn't ever have a deeper storyline behind it or try and conjure up the fact that there was this fantasy world and characters and personalities within it. Now, clearly with the technology that we had, we were only scratching the surface to tell the story and introduce the characters, but people's imagination was sparked and they were able to fill in the gaps, a little bit like the way people read an awful lot more into books and the imagery that they conjure up in their minds is often far more impressive than when Hollywood makes a movie of the book. The best games continue to do this. Finally, we aimed it clearly at the target audience, focusing on entertaining our players rather than on a fast, score-based challenge game or a technology demo.

It may be that Dizzy has had his last outing, although we'd like one day to go back and make another. However, we'd only seriously consider it if we were confident that it would be significantly better and could compete with the best games in the market at the time. Even if,

after all, there are no more Dizzy games, his legacy continues. It's thanks to the people that bought Dizzy that we now have a company of 160+ talented staff making awesome games for today's gamers – and we remain wholly independent! And if you look at some of the games we create today (perhaps particularly Chicken Run!), you can see how Dizzy's influences still live on...

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Greener Grass. No Bullshit.

DIZZYOGRAPHY

1986

- Dizzy

1987

- Treasure Island Dizzy

- Fast Food

1988

- Fantasy World Dizzy

1989

- Kwik Snax

1990

- Magicland Dizzy

- Dizzy Panic!

- Dizzy Prince

of the Yolkfolk

- Bubble Dizzy

- Spellbound Dizzy

1991

- Dizzy Down the Rapids

- The Fantastic

Adventures of Dizzy

- Crystal Kingdom Dizzy

1992

- Dizzy The Adventurer

1993

- Go! Dizzy Go!

TOP 5 EURO DEVELOPER | OVER 150 STAFF & GROWING | JOB SECURITY
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HIT FOR KIXX

Below | Thanks a Million
This is how the Hit Squad was born - a trilogy of compilations for around £15.



Throughout the 80's and early 90's, a huge number of companies were releasing budget games into an already overcrowded market. Big guns like Mastertronic regurgitated games under various guises like 'Mastertronic Plus', 'Mastertronic Added Dimension' (MAD), 'Entertainment USA', 'Ricochet' and 'Tronix'. They found themselves in direct competition with the likes of Codemasters and their 'Cartoon Time' sub-label. Smaller, but no less impressive companies like Hi-Tec software concentrated on releasing Hanna-Barbera related games, whilst Elite graced the scene with a sound selection of arcade conversions like Ghosts'n'Goblins, Commando and Buggy Boy via their Encore label, leaving Hewson to add value with their 'Rack It' range. Amongst this plethora of also-rans, two companies stood head and shoulders above the chasing pack, both in terms of the quantity and quality of their budget re-releases.

The 'Hit Squad' and 'Kixx' budget labels were owned by Ocean Software and US Gold respectively and they dominated the scene. David Ward and Jon Woods co-founded Ocean Software back in the early 80's. As the decade progressed their company expanded rapidly with original titles and arcade conversions vying for shelf space with eponymous film licenses. In fact, the Ward/Woods partnership was so prolific that their contribution to the video games industry was recently recognised by their entry into the ELSPA Hall of Fame - belated reward

for their efforts during the formative years of the industry.

Considering the wealth of software and talent that Ocean accumulated, the launch of a budget label was somewhat inevitable. And so it was that on the 1st of November 1985, the 'Hit Squad' was born. Bragging that they were bringing gamers 'the best group of hits in history', the 'They Sold a Million' compilations were quad packs of 'Triple A' titles culled from the back catalogues of Ocean, Software Projects, Ultimate Play the Game and soon to be arch rival US Gold. The first release boasted Beach Head, Daley Thompson's Decathlon, Jet Set Willy and Sabre Wulf, though C64 owners suffered the indignity of The Staff of Karnath replacing Sabre Wulf. The commercial success of these re-releases laid the foundations for the 'Hit Squad' label to emerge as most gamers now remember it. Full price Ocean games were performing well at retail, with industry sales charts indicating that the Manchester based firm had established a clear lead over rival US Gold. Once a decent back catalogue had been established the success of the 'Hit Squad' label was virtually guaranteed given the wealth of already proven quality software waiting to be re-launched when the label emerged proper in September 1989.

Aware of the success of some of their lesser rivals, Birmingham based US Gold also decided to re-release some of their old stock by launching a budget range of their own. Named 'Kixx', the profile of the label was to be boosted

by the re-release of the home version of the arcade classic Gauntlet. 'Kixx' had plans to release a total of twelve titles in its first year, across seven formats that included the Spectrum, C64, Amstrad, BBC Electron and the C16/Plus 4. Among the frontrunners were Leaderboard, 10th Frame, World Games and Metrocross. And so the battle began with the 'Hit Squad' and 'Kixx' countering every punch that their rival threw at them. One label jabbed with Bubble Bobble, the other re-

the "They Sold a Million" compilations were quad packs of Triple A titles culled from the back catalogues of Ocean, Software Projects, Ultimate Play the Game and soon to be arch rival US Gold.



Left | The many faces of 'Kixx'
This is how their inlays evolved from Gauntlet to the later design we all remember. The tapes went through a change too, from black with white labels to white with red print.

Back in the late 80's, two of the industry's big guns, Ocean and US Gold, fought a bitter battle for supremacy of the fiercely contested budget market. Billy Withers & Craig Vaughan grab their rifles and prepare to relive the pocket money wars...

taliated with Ghouls'n'Ghosts. One went for a knockout blow with Epyx's Summer Games, but the other countered with Daley Thompson's Decathlon. Ocean must have felt capable of winning on points given all its film licenses, but US Gold managed to hold onto the ropes by redelivering Indiana Jones to the masses. And so the fight went a full blooded twelve rounds over a seven year period with the two companies re-releasing three hundred and seventy five games between them, at a staggering average of a game a week between 1988 and 1995.

The budget games sold well, with



most receiving a second wind as a result of their new low-end price tag. A Your Sinclair Magazine Top 100 poll compiled by industry stalwart Stuart Campbell from October 1991 through to February 1992 proves the point. A year later readers had their say after the majority of the 8-bit games had returned to grace shelves. Some titles barely budged in their popularity. Gauntlet moved just one place, whilst Renegade remained unmoved. Most, though saw their chart positions soar. Robocop could only reach 94th place in Campbell's top 100, but a year later its Hit Squad incarnation was propelled to 9th. Chase H.Q. motored up from 22nd place into Pole Position, with other games like Operation Wolf and Midnight Resistance also leapfrogging others to claim higher places. So successful were the budget brands that at their peak they occupied 25% of the top 100 places in sales charts.

In 1991, as something of an aside, US Gold released 'The Multimaxx Collection' of triple pack titles. The first proved popular with golf fans by providing the chance to play the original Leaderboard with World Class Leaderboard and Leaderboard Tournament bundled in. The second offered Beach Head, Beach Head 2 and Raid Over Moscow. 'Multimaxx 3' delivered Street Fighter, 1943 and Bionic Commando. The fourth repackaged Gauntlet with Gauntlet 2 and Gauntlet: The Deeper Dungeon, whilst 'Multimaxx 5' gave gamers the chance to revisit the delights of Auf Wiedersehn Monty, Monty on the Run, and Jack the

Nipper II - The Coconut Capers. Popular though these compilations were, they never achieved the sales attained by the 'Kixx' label, which itself spawned a sub label named 'XL'. Concentrating on the Amiga and Atari ST, this range faced stiff competition from Ocean's own luxury budget label branded 'The Platinum Collection'. These two flagship brands catered for the higher end of the 16-bit market with many of the released titles covering more than the two disc limit catered for in the standard titles, as well as being of a generally higher quality. Point and click fans were spoiled for choice with both of Guybrush Threepwood's visits to Monkey Island, Larry's antics in his Leisure Suit and the Police Quests making their way into the 'XL' fraternity alongside the Delphine classics Another World and Flashback. Ocean, as ever, gave as good as they got and kept strategy fans happy with Dune II and Syndicate, with Robocop 3 and PGA Tour Golf also making an appearance.

It was during the 16-bit era that the 'Hit Squad' and 'Kixx' labels ceased to be. US Gold dabbled in the console market for a while, giving the Master System a little 'Kixx' treatment with Winter Olympics and the Incredible Hulk, whilst Ocean moved on to emerging systems like the Game Boy and 16 bit consoles, releasing some of their wares on the SNES and Mega Drive. They even had a brief flirtation with Sony's Playstation, distributing (Project) X2, Worms and True Pinball before eventually being snapped up by Infogrames (now Atari).

Below Left | The Multimaxx
Value for money or more money for US Gold? The Multimaxx bundles suffered mixed fortunes.

Below | Armalyte
One of Thalamus' entries into the budget market, Armalyte was a gloriously shoot-em-up.



Below | Championship Wrestling
One of the 'C64 only' brigade, Championship Wrestling was a bit of a departure for Epyx.



HITSQUAD

Sorting the wheat from the chaff, Retro Fusion took a trip down memory lane to relive some choice cuts of reshaped gaming from the Hit Squad and Kixx labels, bringing home the best budget releases from the heyday of 8 bit gaming.

KIXX



1. HEAD OVER HEELS Re-released August 1990

John Ritman's website - www.ritman.co.uk Remake available at - retrospec.sgn.net/games/hoh
"Playability beyond compare... The most addictive, playable, fun game ever. Miss this at your peril!" Crash Smash 9/10
"It's a timeless classic, and not surprisingly it plays best of all on the humble ol' Spectrum" Your Sinclair 98%

If you've never experienced its joys then you've missed out on one of the greatest gaming experiences of the 8-bit era. Still fresh thanks to the genius gameplay mechanic of having two uniquely skilled but totally interdependent characters relying on each other in order to make progress, it's clear that subsequent games like Lemmings and the Lost Vikings were more than merely inspired by a game that's as compelling now as it has ever been.

Rating then - 98% | Rating now - 95% | A stand-out classic.

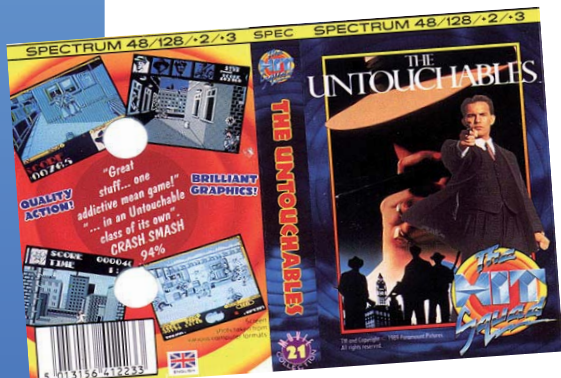


2. RAINBOW ISLANDS Re-released - March 1992

Graftgold fansite at - www.nemmelheim.de/graftgold Taito information website at - www.taito.overclocked.org
"Possibly the best game of its genre." Zzap Sizzler
"Terrific! Your ultimate game has arrived." Crash Smash 94%

Given the number of classic arcade games produced by Taito, it's clear their maxim must have been: 'Playability is King'. This fiendishly addictive platformer constantly amazes. Blessed with a simple gameplay mechanic that required players to progress from the bottom of the level to the top, the game used rainbows both as weapons and as a means of transport. The main protagonists Bub and Bob went on to star in a number of adventures, but never recaptured the colourful charm of this outing.

Rating then - 93% | Rating now - still 93% | As colourful as a rainbow itself.



3. THE UNTOUCHABLES Re-released - September 1991

"Great stuff...one addictive, mean game!" "...in an Untouchable class of its own." Crash Smash 94%
"The only problem you'll have with Untouchables is taking your hands off it long enough to grab some social life." Sinclair User 90%

One of the better film licenses to grace the 8-bits, The Untouchables was a jack-of-all-trades film tie-in that gave more perceived value for money than its rivals. Polished until it shone, its diverse gameplay, which included a scene where players had to protect a baby's pram as it careered down stairs, won it solid reviews and healthy sales.

Rating then - 93% | Rating now - 83% | How a film licence should be handled.



4. MIDNIGHT RESISTANCE Re-Released - June 1992

"A brilliant computer shoot-'em-up. Packed with blasting mayhem...highly recommended." Crash Smash 93%
"All I can say is WOW! What a stunning game." Sinclair User 90%

Midnight Resistance earned a 93% Crash Smash. This was a game many people would have acquired when they picked up their shiny new Commodore 64. The Night Moves/Mind Benders Pack was a pretty sound pack-in, with games like Sly Spy, Snare and Split Personalities accompanying this great little coin-op conversion. It was a game that begged to be played from beginning to end. Graphically accomplished, the faithfulness of the conversion won the game many admirers, but it was the fast-paced, in-your-face action that saw gamers battling through to the end credits.

Rating then - 93% | Rating now - 86% | Still as playable as it ever was.



5. BUBBLE BOBBLE Re-released - September 1991

Fansite at - www.bubandbob.com
"On your own you'll find it playable enough - team up with another Spec-chum and it's a riot!" 90% Your Sinclair.
"A superlative conversion which retains all of the fun and features of the original." Zzap Sizzler 97%

Another Taito coin-op conversion starring Bub and Bob, Bubble Bobble was a massive hit on all the home formats it graced in 1991. The classic mix of platform-hopping and bubble-bursting saw off all pretenders, including the likes of Rodland, Snow Bros and Tumble Pop. Often imitated, but never surpassed, two-player Bubble Bobble remains the seminal co-op platforming experience.

Rating then - 92% | Rating now - 90% | Another great coin-op conversion with bags of charisma.

1. GAUNTLET Re-released - February 1989

"It's bags of fun and well worth the money." 9 out of 10 Your Sinclair Megagame
"If you were silly enough to miss it first time round, get it NOW!" Crash 85%

Gauntlet was the first title to come out on the KIXX label and it was a great way to kick-start the brand. Another graduate from the school of simple but ingenious gameplay, Kixx demonstrated how a coin-op conversion should be done. It still holds its own today, especially when played with friends. It seamlessly combines frantic maze navigating action with monster mashing to provide a perfectly balanced experience. A cracking good all-rounder on the three formats it graced.

Rating then - 90% | Rating now - 80% | Graphics fade, but gameplay never dies.



2. TURRICAN Re-released - January 1992

Fansite available at - turricanforever.de Manfred Tranz fanpage - www.mt-fanpage.de
"There's a storm force wind of change blowing through action games. It comes from Rainbow Arts and it's called Turrican" Amstrad Action Master Game 90% - *"Extremely Playable and maddeningly addictive."* C&VG Hit 93%

Manfred Tranz's masterpiece was a respectable piece of software on all formats, but the C64 version was the one to own. The technical abilities of each machine were pushed as a matter of course by enemies that routinely stretched past the height of the visible playing area. The sound was top notch too. It's a game that you'd expect to sport the tag line "coin-op conversion" due to its arcade feel.

Rating then - 94% | Rating now - 94% | One word - Classic.



3. MYTH Re-released - June 1992

"To my mind this is a dream come true, with an atmosphere that goes through the roof - a brilliant game" 94% Zzap Sizzler.
"Great on brawn, great on brain, great on graphics. A winner!" Crash Smash 96%

System 3 were masters of their craft and effortlessly demonstrated the fact with Myth. Pushing each format beyond recognised limits, this adventure proved something of a graphical treasure trove, with beautiful presentation and animation throughout. Underneath the fancy visuals lay a solid and playable affair soaked in atmosphere.

Rating then - 92% | Rating now - 84% | Shows there was more to System 3 than the Last Ninja.



4. LEADERBOARD Re-released - February 1989

"This is the sports simulation of the year if not the decade" Zzap 64
Your Sinclair "Mastergame"

Leaderboard was another one of the early arrivals from KIXX. The Access Software release became the champion golf sim and retained the crown until the later emergence of the PGA Tour series from EA. Graphically polished, players were able to see the courses being built before their very eyes. The lack of decent sound grated, although the C64 splash effect was so uncannily lifelike that many players intentionally hit water shots just to experience it.

Rating then - 85% | Rating now - still 85% | Still plays a good game. Who needs analogue sticks?



5. STUNT CAR RACER Re-released - January 1992

"A truly stunning racing simulation that leaves the rest for dead" Amstrad Action Master Game 96%
"For sheer racing thrills and spills there's nothing to touch it." Commodore User

Geoff Crammond, the man who would go on to make his money from the Grand Prix series of games, made his name with this one. Stunt Car Racer was simple, but brilliantly stylish. The graphics hid an adrenalin-inducing racing game that gave an unsurpassed sensation of speed as players battled to keep their 4-wheeled monster on tortuously narrow tracks. Retro fans will be delighted to hear that fledgling handheld console wannabe the Gizmondo is about to host a remake.

Rating then - 96% | Rating now - 90% | A mould-breaking racing game.



ALL AT SEA

Name | Mark R Jones (AKA "Junior" back then)
Job Title | Computer games graphic designer
HISTORY | with Ocean Full time January 1987 to January 1989 and a brief period in the early 90s



Right | Then and Now
Mark Jones in his Ocean days and as he is now - helping to maintain the Ocean Experience website amongst other things.

Below | All his own work
The titles that Mark did the graphics himself for: Gryzor, Wizball and The Vindicator.

The Ocean Experience (www.theoceanexperience.co.uk) is a thriving website maintained by the talented duo of Will Harbiton and Mark Jones. It pays homage to the Manchester based software company and allows the defunct company to live on in the hearts of gamers. Jones recently took time out from maintaining the site to relive his Ocean coding days

Retro Fusion - Mark, you were a graphic designer with Ocean, what would you say were the biggest games that you worked on while you were there?

Mark Jones - The games that I worked on exclusively were the Spectrum versions of 'Wizball', 'Gryzor' and 'Vindicator'. I also worked on various other Speccy titles and participated in the 16 bit versions of 'Rambo III' and 'Total Recall'.

How many people would you say, on average, would work on one game, budget or otherwise?

Well none of the games were actually produced to be budget games. The budget games Ocean released were older titles that had previously been available full-price. In the days of the 8-bit computer it was just three people per game. All you needed was one programmer, one on the graphics and a musician to do the tunes. In the early days of the 16-bit machines you still usually had one programmer writing the code, maybe 2 or 3 on the graphics because, what with all the extra colours and memory, you could have more frames of animation, so it took a lot longer to produce what was needed.

When the news of a budget label being set up became reality, how did it make you feel knowing that a lot of the games you had put so much effort into were being re-released to a different audience?

We weren't really told anything about it. I think the first we knew of it was when the adverts started appearing in magazines. Because the budget games were just re-releases there was no point in telling us, the people who produced the games. It made no difference to us, I just thought it would give the games we made a longer shelf life and give people a chance to get them who couldn't afford them when they were new releases.

Was there any added pressure having these titles re-released with maybe the odd tweak having to be performed?

No, no pressure at all. As far as I know there were no changes made to any of the games. We had all put those games to bed long ago. We were working on new projects and I think asking any of us to go and redo stuff on an old title would have just induced a mass groan.

Did it feel like there was a bit of competition between Ocean and US Gold to grab the punters and do you think the budget labels helped to fuel any rivalry between the two?

There was always an interest in what they were doing because US Gold was really the only company that was anywhere near as big as Ocean. But I don't know about the budget label having any effect, we didn't take much notice, we just focused on the new product we were producing at the time. Did US Gold start a budget label the same time as us? I can't remember now.

If Ocean had still been around today, do you think you would still be working there, or would you have sought pastures new?

No, I wouldn't be there now. I left way before it shut down. Mainly because I think I left home too early to move up to Manchester. I was 16 when I started and I just couldn't settle here and went home every weekend. I do regret leaving when I did but that's just how things worked out. I was only there for two and a bit years but it was a huge part of my life. It helped shape me and I'll never forget everyone I worked with there. Funnily enough I'm now back up in Manchester where Ocean was based and I'm planning on staying here.

Would you say there was a big threat from some of the other companies or did Ocean have such a big hand in the market that they were unassailable?

I don't think Ocean really felt threatened by anyone. They seemed to be able to do what they wanted at the time because they were so big and well known.

Finally, other than the Ocean Experience website, what are your plans for the future?

I've just finished four years studying

graphic design, (my website is <http://www.salesbytes.co.uk/markjones/>). I am currently looking for work in the Manchester area so if anyone thinks they have a use for me then do not hesitate to get in touch. Through the Ocean website I've got back in touch with lots of old friends so hopefully we'll all get back together at some point soon. Also, I recently discovered a lot of my old Ocean development work for the Spectrum. I didn't think anything of it at the time but there seems to be huge interest in seeing what's actually survived. I know there is unused code, but what exactly I don't know because I haven't seen the data for at least 15 years. The information is stored on the old microdrive cartridges that are currently winging their way to an expert who can convert any still readable data to a PC. I believe that if the data is retrievable then it'll be the first body of graphic development work to be made available on any game via the net. I found 52 cartridges so hopefully that'll turn up some goodies. We'll have to wait and see.

"I recently discovered a lot of my old Ocean development work for the Spectrum... I believe that if the data is retrievable then it'll be the first body of graphic development work to be made available on any game via the net."

Deep within the jungle glade
Where snakes and bats and spiders played
There lie pages, long since lost
Hidden throughout spring and frost
Filled with tales the eyes must scan
Adventures, of the Sabre Man

Day Three:

For untold hours I have been exploring this jungle, yet still I cannot rest. Whenever I find a suitable spot to pitch camp, I am beset by foul creatures. If I linger still longer a dancing flame of many hues and curious melody torments my efforts. Though my supply of marshmallows is now toasted to perfection, I dearly long for the sweet embraces of sleep.

Day Four:

I have finally managed to grab some much needed rest by lying perfectly between two flip-screens and moving my head by tiny amounts every few seconds. This situation is far from ideal. Alas, I fear sleep deprivation is also taking a creeping hold - my brain is filled with poetry of a dubious quality and my ears pick up distant unearthly howls upon the wind.

Day Six:

It seems I am not alone in the jungle. As well as spiders and scorpions in all the eight colours of the world, I have encountered solemn knights of the realm in fearsome spiked

is positively the worst possible thing which could ever happen to anyone, ever.

Day Eleven:

It turns out that was not the worst possible thing which could ever happen to anyone, ever. Today I met a wild hippo cavorting along a strangely fixed territorial axis. Do hippos even live in the jungle? I had precious little time to consider this conundrum before the wretched animal hit me square in the chest, catapulting my broken body across the full length of the undergrowth. There's no time for recovery, I must press ever onwards. My clothes are already stained and torn, I do not wish them to be burnt by that damned magical fire as well.

Day Twelve:

How I wish I had learnt to use a sword properly. Enemies who honourably approach from the front undoubtedly feel the cold taste of my steel, yet I am unable to master any sort of upward or downward strokes, leaving me open to ignominious attacks. It is as if my very arm is locked solidly in place, perhaps from sheer fatigue.

Day Fourteen:

I met a masked stranger deep within the rock of some ancient caves. Bitterly, I must report that my hopes of salvation were dashed almost as quickly as they blossomed in my chest. This man seemed quite insane and could not prevent himself from hopping from foot to foot in some form of primitive dance. I

armour. Frankly, I am moved to question the logic of wearing plated metals in the sweltering heat of our location. I have tried to engage one of the lofty fellows in conversation about the benefits of dressing in comfortable slacks and a pith helmet but he was rudely oblivious to my sensible suggestions. Even more irritating, the beasts of the forest seemingly have no interest in attacking my aristocratic comrades. I reassure myself that they are merely waiting for the first one to collapse in exhaustion before ravenously descending. Oh yes, before too long those arrogant swines will be crawling to me for fashion tips.

Day Eight:

Last night I swore I heard the strains of J. S. Bach drifting deftly through the forest... but no, it can only have been a beautiful dream. All a dream... a trick of the mind, like the devilish howling which draws ever closer... just an illusion...

Day Nine:

My junglewear! My deluxe AdventureTime™ junglewear, ruined by a FLOWER! I was harmlessly sniffing a particularly regal looking purple lotus when it had the audacity to shoot GVNK all over me. Worse still, I am having to write this entry backwards because whatever that toxin contained, it has disastrously affected my hand-eye co-ordination. Where am I going to find a physician in this maze, let alone a laundrette? This

am mindful that he may have ingested too much lotus flower juice. Throughout his continually mesmerising motion he would speak only of an ancient amulet, split into four pieces and scattered throughout this cursed place. Why would he not let me pass? Why am I doomed to walk this brightly coloured flip-screen map for all eternity? Damn that prancing man and damn this hellish green prison!

Day Twenty:

The mere effort of writing now seems as great a task as scaling one of the distant candy floss pink mountains. I have had no sight of the fabled amulet. My spirit is broken. How I wish I could simply shut my ears to the terrible noises of night. I think I see eyes in the darkness now... terrible blood red eyes, eyes hungry for Sabreflesh. I desire only for sleep and the soft light of dawn... but the howling continues unabated... oh god, the howling... the howling...

SABREMAN DIARIES

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The Back of the Arcade

It really depends on how avid an arcade goer you were as to whether the Back 'O The arcade means anything to you. Let's say, for instance, that your arcade career consisted mainly of pleasant family trips to Blackpool, whence you would venture into the deafening, neon embrace of the promenades fine gaming houses and check out the latest coin-ops fresh from Japan. What a great way to spend your holiday, and it beats the hell out of playing with a bucket and spade in the drizzle. You were happy, the summers were long and your trousers weren't weighed down by 10p pieces when you went home. Same time next year, Coral Island?

But if that wasn't enough for you - if you came home with a 'kiss me quick' hat, one of those big dummies made of translucent red rock and a distinct feeling of going cold turkey - the chances are you sought out your squalid local video game venues, where the light of the Golden Mile never shone and people played games out of depression, rather than escapism. You'd be unlikely to find a hydraulic Space Harrier cabinet shout-

ing his signature death knell from the doorway to entice you in, but rather a hole in a brick wall filled with crumbling, unloved JAMMA cabinets limping along with last years games flickering on the struggling half-light of a nicotine coated monitor.

At the back (ahhh, now you see where the clever name comes from) there would be the old campaigners; games that were never particularly well known, but due to a steady supply of regular callers, brought in enough revenue to pay their ground rent and become permanent residents of the old coin-op's home. The top games were too expensive for the lowly back alley arcade operator, but many got their tattooed knuckles on some undiscovered gems - games that never made the big time, but were fantastic, well kept secrets of the coin-op age. Here, we will look back at those unsung heroes, and perhaps cry a little as their stories are finally told.

This issue, I found myself hooked on a couple of rather nifty shmups - not my favourite games, but like the unrepentant pugilist that I am, I persevered for your sake. No applause, please...

THUNDER DRAGON 2

DEVELOPER : NMK YEAR : 1993 IF YOU LIKE THIS, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...: Tiger Heli & 1942

78%

THUNDERDRAGON 2

Thunder Dragon 2 is... a nuclear whirlwind of airborne mayhem, demanding the player concentrates intently on the impossible path their ship must weave through an endless onslaught of synchronised attack patterns.

No longer dogged by graphical, audio or memory limitations, the scrolling shooter of the mid-90s was free to go ballistic with the massive numbers of sprites, guns and explosions they had always coveted. This also had a detrimental effect on the genre, however, turning them into intense button mashing marathons of a maximum 20 to 30 seconds.

Thunder Dragon 2 is just such a nuclear whirlwind of airborne mayhem, demanding the player concentrates intently on the impossible path their ship must weave through an endless onslaught of synchronised attack patterns. Maybe the enemies don't have the small selection of mega-bombs that our war machines are equipped with, but the steady stream of perfectly round, primary coloured balls (that seem to be the weapon of choice for generic shoot 'em up drones) are more than adequate when strategically deployed.

Identical enemy ships on either side of the screen, shooting the same co-ordinated, aesthetic patterns of hostile fire that blossom out steadily to form impassable death-matrices are more than a match for three poxy nukes that you never get chance to use anyway. An unfortunate shmup trend of that particular decade.

It's this over-the-top visual cacophony that caused me to take an extra five points off TD2's score that I might not have deducted from a similar title. If you want to make any progress, you must pour all your attention on your own ship, and not being able to enjoy the artistic delights that NMK adorned their nimble shooter with is too much of a transgression to lightly forgive.

Where Thunder Dragon 2 wins back its integrity is in its designs. The player sets off in what appears to be



a fairly standard biplane - nothing new there, you quite rightly interject, but TD2 immediately makes apparent how other shooters of a similar vein all too often cast such vehicles as being lethargic, un-maneuvrable sheds of the sky. I'm sure any reincarnated WW1 pilots would argue that the speeds and situations were far more hair raising than the leisurely jaunts over suburbia that many shoot 'em ups suggest they were.

Thunder Dragon takes that old machinery and grants it the aerobatic finesse it deserves. The drones still attack in established shmup formations, but as they turn, the aircraft bank, swerve and dive; playing with the clouds like deviant Red Arrows, turned to the dark side. The end of level floating fortresses cast an equally impressive shadow, pouring vicious retribution onto the player who attempts to chip away at their armour, in good shmup style.

The same conscientiousness has been put to work on the environmental designs, which have, again, been seen plenty of times before, though perhaps not with such eminent quality. One of the most impressive, yet easily overlooked backgrounds is level one; soaring high above the fields and towns you are presumably looking to protect. Such a genuine feeling of altitude has seldom been infused by hand drawn graphics, with a slight haziness and multiple levels of wispy clouds above and below the plane. If there was time to admire the view, this could have been a classic.

A shmup has to work hard to impress me (a devout beat 'em up fanatic), but I have to say that Thunder Dragon 2 succeeded, despite my initial resolve that it won't never. Especially one for fans of the biplane shooter.

92%

DEVELOPER : JALECO YEAR : 1993 IF YOU LIKE THIS, YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE...: Ikari Warriors & Truxton

CYBATTLER



your mech's name is Blanche, just like that one out of the Golden Girls. Still, when you're effectively built of planet destroying guns mounted on 25 foot of techno-muscle, your name can be Sweet Candy McRinglets and no ones going to argue.

After R-Type, shmups weren't complete without some kind of indestructible accoutrement. In 1989, Jaleco's horizontal scrolling shooter, Saint Dragon, starred some kind of robotic dragon whose tail was, yes that's right, indestructible. Only a direct hit on the cockpit could bring the Dragon down. This was a favourite of mine back in the day, although I now have to say it hasn't aged all that well.

It was apparently valuable experience for the shmup boffins at Jaleco, however, because in 1993 they brought us the remarkable 'mech' based Cybattler; a vertical shooter with an underlying beat 'em up lilt. An unusual combination, to be sure, but by gum, does it pay off!

Here's the crack. The player's character in Cybattler is a 'Mech'; the big humanoid-styled manga war machinery as per Robotech and Macross Plus. Yet despite being an eighteen wheeled, block rockin', hard fightin' son of a mother-trucker, your mech's name is Blanche, just like that one out of the Golden Girls. Still, when you're effectively built of planet destroying guns mounted on 25 foot of techno-muscle, your name can be Sweet Candy McRinglets and no one's going to argue.

How much of a story does a game like this need? From what we can gleam - should we be so inclined to reduce this marvel in video game mecha-violence to bedtime storytelling - you are under attack from similarly designed weaponry as yourself, only in far greater numbers. Armed with your Beam Launcher (big fat laser gun), you must take to the heavens and vanquish that which stands for whatever you don't stand for. Simple.

Did I say vertical scroller? Well, that's only a half truth. Although the scrolling is vertical - and top to bot-

tom is the direction the path takes us - Cybattler's control system is rather unique and requires the player to work the entire screen, shooting rapidly in every direction to thwart this invading technological menace. The character always faces in the direction the joystick is pointing, so if you pull down, Blanche faces toward the bottom of the screen and shoots her gun in that direction. While shooting, however, she begins to strafe, training her gun in that same direction regardless of where you steer her about the screen until the fire button is released. This is similar in vein to the rotational joysticks of Ikari Warriors, and works just as well. This extra dimension adds an element of action to Cybattler that is seldom, if ever, found in the limited movement of other shmups.

And the action doesn't stop there. Along side the limited ammunition of the Beam Launcher is the 'Beam Sword', and here is where we find the unique beat 'em up dynamic. Unusually, your ship is not destroyed by making contact with the enemy vehicles - just their weapons fire. This adds the dimension of close quarters combat with the Beam Sword; allowing the gun to recharge while cleaving enemy ships in twain as you burn about the screen like a crazed mecha-wasp on heat. This facet of the exhilarating gameplay shunts Cybattler into high orbit above the over populated planet Shmup and into the realm of the Gods.

If you are a fan of manga, shoot 'em ups, beat 'em ups, gardening programs, David Dickenson or sitting quietly and reading books, this game is for you.

More forgotten arcade gems from the pen of Spanner Spencer next issue...



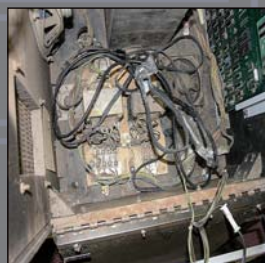


COCKTAIL TABLE RESTORATION BY ARCHER MACLEAN

There aren't many original Pacman cocktails in the UK, possibly not even in double digits – and yet despite all my other weird 'n' wonderful cabs, I didn't used to have a Pacman Cocktail. So when I came across a knackered looking one for sale at an auction in the USA I jumped at the chance of giving it a good home and restoring it to its former glory. After all, Pacman is one of the top most recognisable arcade games of all time and the brand is huge all over the world 26 years on.



Above | Unpacking the Pac 25 years of wear and tear on this little number had taken its toll on poor old Pacman's insides. The doctor was called to inspect and this is what was found.



Above | Deep within Pac On closer inspection it can clearly be seen to be a nasty situation. But whereas a lot of people would give up, there was a lot of passion being instilled in this restoration.

So, after a bit of a haggle, I bought it, and a USA friend of mine was kind enough to allow me to dump it in his garage and crate it up onto a small wooden pallet. In the past I have loaded up and shipped entire containers full of cabs to build up my collection, but this was the first time I had shipped just one machine by air freight. So I called my usual shipper and found out it was not much more difficult than sending a parcel back home. They do all the paperwork and simply collect and handle everything. Now here's the amazing thing, the mini crate got picked up on a

Friday morning in the USA, and I flew back on the Saturday arriving Sunday. By the time I'd had a good night's sleep it was Monday and to my utter amazement I got a call from the air freight people to say it had already arrived in the UK. They delivered on the Tuesday morning. That's faster than a first class airmail letter! And what's more the total cost was approx £350 plus some VAT and some minimal admin charges.

Anyway, first inspection showed it to be scratched and dented all over, and full of 25 yrs worth of crud, dust, dead flies, ripped playing cards etc. And on top of that a lot of the electrical connections looked typically crusty, and the monitors' electrostatic charge had attracted about 5mm thick of grease and dust all over it including the screen surface.

After a basic electrical pre-check, I disconnected the game electronics and converted the power supply to 240volts, which

is only a couple of wires to change on the transformer. Checking it with a scope showed all the voltages under load were behaving as expected. Next



up, I plugged the loom in to see if the cabinet lived... nothing, not even a munching sound. Turned out not to be all bad because the monitor came up eventually, and displayed a screen full of graphic garbage, so the board was semi dead/semi working but nothing unusual based on experience. The monitor was shot because even after a warm up the picture was wav-ing about, was irreversibly blurred, and showed all the signs of needing a full cap-kit and probably other fixes, and besides it was filthy and I wanted this machine to look mint inside and out. I had a few spare brand-new old-



spec monitors so I decided to fit one along the way. I plugged in a spare working Pacman board to double check, but the monitor really was dud. It also had real bad screen burn for being 25 yrs old.

Over the following few weekends I set about stripping it right down to leave just a wooden shell in readiness for a total ground up restoration. Whenever I do a this type of project I photograph everything as I dismantle, so I have something to refer to if I lose track of what goes where.

So this is roughly what happened. Remove and shot blast all metal parts including the coin door, metal clips holding the glass down, the speaker and air vent grills. Then coat them in zinc primer and finally powder coat them in black satin. I ended



up buying replacement speaker grills from USA as the removed ones were too badly dented. Total cost approx £30.

I took the glass off and scanned the Pacman graphic into 9 or so A4 scans, and spent probably 10-12 hours building up a very high resolution underlay image so that I could use my other artwork / printing skills to reprint my own Pacman underlay. The



precise colour matching was done with a photo-spectrometer and lots of calibrated colour swatches I have.

As some of you may know I produce perfectionistic full side art for many of the classic arcade games from late 70s through to mid 80's and whilst it isn't cheap you won't find



anyone else in the world who supplies a better product in such a specialised area.

Then I got the glass top duplicated using laminated shatter resistant glass, and had the edges rounded off. I made two more just in case I broke one, and just in case I find another Pacman or Galaxian cocktail one day. Cost for all three was about £60.

Before I shot blasted the control panels I scanned them as best I could

you wont find anyone else in the world who supplies a better product...

from what was left of the original overlays – and had to do both as they are different for each side. I probably spent a couple of hours redrawing the graphics for these using the scans as templates. I printed and laminated them with coarse textured polymer just like the bigger runs of production standard CPO's I reproduce for the more common classic arcade machines.

The original Pacman board that came with the machine needed too much work done on the electronics for me to economically fix even though I supposedly have a degree in



electronics (and not computer science as everyone reckons), so it was sent off to an expert game PCB repairer Phil Morris. His unusual skills in fixing these old boards allowed him to re-furbish and return it within a week, and it needed quite a few of the TTL chips replacing, as well as a couple of dead RAM chips and the audio section had gone pop at some point. Cost of repairing electronics like this can be £50-100 plus bits. I have spent years building up stocks of really weird old chips from the 70s and 80s as they are now becoming very hard to find. I mean, where else can you get a tiny 14 pin ram chip that stores a mere 1k bits of ram?

The wooden shell needed quite a lot of work, so when it was totally stripped down I masked off the veneer areas and blasted the entire insides with matt black paint, and hand



painted the external round corners with a satin black to match the coin door and grills.

I noticed that the t-molding trim that runs around the wooden edge of the glass table top was unusual because it was 26mm instead of he

panels was not so easy to replace because Namco/Midway seem to have made them secure by pinning them with pins through the wood using some sort of high powered pin-gun. Getting the pins out to remove the original knackered t-molding was quite an effort as I didn't want to ruin the wood and veneer.

I decided early on that the original 3 inch inset wooden base that the whole cab sits on would have to go because it was beyond repair and I didn't really like the look of it either.

Its purpose was to lift the cab off the floor providing ventilation as there is a fan located in the cabinet base. So I fitted 4 screw-in slide feet to keep it 2cm off the floor and not block the fan.

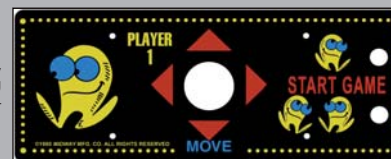
The original fan had knackered bearings so I replaced this with a standard PC type 120mm cooling fan which ran silent.

The entire Loom needed to be stripped and cleaned as all the wires were coated in 25 yrs of filth like everything else. But to avoid losing the layout of what wires go where, I do this stage by stage, stripping down a couple of feet at once, cleaning, and then reassembling with new cable ties.

The biggest job was replacing the monitor. It's a standard lo-res 19" 15khz G07 type monitor used in most cabs from the early 80s. These were still be made until recently by Wells Gardner in Chicago, and I bought a few as spares.



Right | CPO Final Design After scanning the original, Archer had the painstaking task of re-creating the original designs.



Left | CPO Final Design As you can see, it looks pretty damn tidy and to the average Joe, not a hint of difference from the very originals.



Archer Maclean | Biography

Archer Maclean became a Midnight Oil man in the 80's after becoming just as addicted to the coin-ops of the day as everyone else was, but instead of letting Mr Arcade take his money and walk away, Archer decided to write his own clones of the games he had spent so much time playing, hence beginning his association with the gaming world.

A big inspiration to Archer was Midway man, Eugene Jarvis, famed for games like Defender, mainly because of his ability to produce very fluid, quality games on limited hardware. The love of Jarvis' games would go some way to explaining why his first game was the Defender style Dropzone.

Since that breakthrough, Archer has released hit after hit, all retaining the quality set by his original opus. Archer chose to do many of the ports of his early titles himself thus demonstrating a "if you want something done right..." kind of style to his work.

After Dropzone, World Karate Championship followed in '86, the much loved International Karate in the same year, IK+ in '87, with the move to 3D arriving in the form of Jimmy White's Snooker in 1991 and the Pool version coming soon after. The Jimmy White franchise spawned a few more titles before the completely original Mercury graced us last year on the PSP.

Archer is a huge collector of Arcade machines and has his own rare selection of original cabinets, allowing us people who were lucky enough to make it to the Retro Ball to see his pristine Pac Man restoration, a cabinet he sold sometime ago to Blitz Games.

X-Arcade

X-ARCADE TRACKBALL

A new arcade controller has hit the market and retro fusion has one to give away to one lucky retro-fan...

"Give your games the control they deserve--inject the ultimate arcade experience into your PC/Mac™ and enhance the enjoyment of any existing mouse-based game or your favourite arcade classics"

Bold words indeed but that is what the makers of this industrial strength arcade trackball control pad would have you believe of their new product on their website at www.x-arcade.com/trackball.

The first impression you get of the X-arcade trackball is the sheer size of the packaging and its weight. On unpacking the contents of the box what you have before you is the control panel itself, measuring 42.5cm (L) x 26cm (W) x 12cm (H), along with an instruction leaflet and an Atari Anniversary CD.

The CD has a number of classic Atari arcade games that used a trackball controller in their original arcade cabinet release. The likes of Asteroids, Centipede, Millipede, Missile Command and Tempest are a few of the titles that put this device to good use. The games are faithful recreations of their original counterparts but annoyingly run in a low-res arcade cabinet bezel surrounding the game.

The control panel itself is built to last. It is constructed from vinyl covered particle board that is trimmed all around with authentic arcade cabinet black T-molding. The controls themselves are also authentic arcade components which can take the obligatory beating that some games need in order to get that high score. This device is virtually indestructible and comes with a lifetime guarantee,

a sure testament of confidence by X-gaming in their product.

The controller has 3 black buttons each side of a sunken white trackball thus allowing both left and right handed players comfort of play. Each button is 1" in diameter and the trackball itself is 2.6". There are an additional 2 buttons, one each side of the unit which can be used as "flipper" buttons whilst playing Pinball related games. Towards the rear of the unit is a single button that when pushed restricts the trackball to only up/down movement – this is ideal for players to smash perfectly straight drives in the golf game of their choice when using this unit.

On the bottom of the unit are 6 rubber feet that ensure the stability of controller during those frantic games playing moments.

The X-Arcade Trackball comes with both a PS2 and USB connector. My preference of connection is via USB due to the simplicity of plugging the controller into one of the USB ports at the front of my PC. As the device replicates the features of a mouse, no driver installation is required in Windows. The sensitivity of the trackball can therefore be adjusted via the standard Control Panel mouse options.

This device is ideal for playing games within MAME (of course you have to own the original arcade machine to legally play the ROM within MAME) as well as any other game that can use a mouse as a control peripheral.

Classics such as Missile Command and Centipede were designed with a trackball controller in mind as the interface between the player and the game. The X-Arcade trackball provides

the modern day game player the opportunity to play these games as the designers originally envisaged and to say that the playing experience is enhanced as a result is an understatement to say the least.

The build quality of the unit cannot be faulted. The arcade controls are responsive and positioned comfortably on the control panel for both left and right handed play and are built to withstand frenzied game bashing over a long period of time. Set-up is a breeze as the X-arcade trackball maps onto the mouse setup within the operating system of the computer played on.

On the negative side of things the bolts holding the trackball in place could have been channelled into the panel and hidden and the range of games that the panel can be used to play is obviously more limited than a normal joystick and button combination. The RRP of the unit is a little high for the casual gamer but when compared to the cost of standalone arcade components, the unit is extremely good value for money.

Competition Time::

This device comes highly recommended by Retro Fusion magazine and here's your chance to win one courtesy of Gremlin Solutions (www.gremlinsolutions.co.uk), the preferred re-seller of X-Gaming devices in the UK. All you need to do to enter is to email the answer to the following question to competition@retrofusion.co.uk. Good luck!

Who manufactured the Asteroids arcade game?

Competition rules:

1. The competition is open to all residents of the UK except affiliates of Retro Fusion and their immediate families.
2. Only one applicant per household will be accepted.
3. There is no cash alternative prize.
4. No Purchase necessary.
5. The closing date is 30th May 2006; entries after this date will be rejected. The winner of the trackball will be notified as soon as possible after this date.
6. The decision of the editor will be final.
7. By entering the competition, competitors agree to be bound by the rules of the competition.



I'm a competitive sort of chap. In a previous life I competed at National level on the running track. These days I tend to compete with myself and often take on tasks that can be seen as unattainable by some, just to see if I can rise to the challenge.

Over the last couple of years I have been to a few retro related shows in the UK that were either down the south part of the country or up north – each one a nightmare to travel to. So when some colleagues starting talking about putting on an event between a couple of the retro forums I frequent, the stage was set for my next challenge – to organise a retro event and to host it much closer to home.

The seed of The Retro Ball was planted back at the end of July 2005. Pete Beverley (aka DJMassive) suggested we raise some money for the Everyman charity by organising an

evening of gaming competitions between the Retro Passion (www.retropassion.co.uk) and Digital Arcade (www.digitalarcade.co.uk) forum members. This definitely sounded like a good idea, but I thought why don't we do this on a much larger scale. Pete, Leigh Cooper (aka Koopa42) and I discussed the fledgling retro event further over a number of posts on the forums.

My daughter turned 6 some months earlier and we held her birthday party at a local cricket club called The Wardens in Kenilworth. The event manager was a very nice lady called Lynda and I arranged to meet up with her one evening to see if we could come to some arrangement on using the club premises for the event. Now at this point the vision of what the Retro Ball would be was quite sketchy – no exhibitors were on board at this time so we discussed more about the concept of what we were planning than anything else. Thankfully Lynda was willing to take a gamble and within ½ hr of discussion the dates of the 3rd and 4th December were pencilled into her diary under the

heading "Retro Weekend". The bonus was that we were allowed to use the venue for the weekend for free, including the Friday for set-up – Result!

Supporting the Cause

I contacted a number of retro 'friends' to test out their support for the event.

First up was Andy from Console Passion. Andy had been a great supporter of the Retro Revival fanzine (www.retrorevival.co.uk) that I had been sub-editing. I asked him if he would be interested in sponsoring the event – thankfully he was and as a bonus he also wanted to exhibit.

Next up was Barry from Retro Passion (www.retropassion.co.uk). Again a full 100% support was received.

Chris Abbott, the organiser of the Back In Time events, came up with the clever name of "The Retro Ball". The Everyman charity researches cures for male cancers including testicular cancer so Chris found it very amusing when we decided to use his suggested name (see the ball link).



3

CREDIT 05

In the run up to CGEUK in August I became good friend with Chris and Christine Millard the organisers. Chris came up with the idea of hosting a number of charity events going forward under the Play4Charity banner, The Retro Ball being the first. Chris designed the Play4Charity logo, kindly purchased the domain name and also provided us with free web hosting.

Pete Beverley designed, developed and maintained The Retro Ball web site. Pete also designed an A4 event poster using a theme based on the Arkanoid and Space Invaders games. We laminated a number of these posters and took them along with over 150 A5 flyers to CGEUK to hand out.

CGEUK was deemed a success by the majority but many complaints on the retro forums centred around the feeling that the show was more of a glorified car boot sale or jumble sale rather than a retro event. I did not want The Retro Ball to be labelled as such so we came up with the concept of zones, each zone based on a gaming genre i.e. shoot em up zone, fighting zone etc.

The idea was to create an arcade based on those I used to frequent in the 1980's back home in the seaside resorts in West Wales. I wanted visitors faces to light up with joy as they saw, and heard, an environment they remembered from their youth. This was the vision, this is what we had to recreate and after CGEUK we had just over 3-months to pull it off.

Time passed slowly. The excitement started to grow on the forums as its members looked forward to the event. I monitored ticket sales, praying that enough people would come to make it worthwhile. Now was not a time to try and quit biting my nails!

A local radio station contacted me wanting to help promote the event as it was for charity. Now hearing myself on

the radio is one of the strangest things I have ever experienced and every time I heard the ad play I hung onto every word, hoping I would not stumble or say something stupid - and I never did. I was a true professional each and every time. It had nothing to do with the editing, honest!

The Day before the Day after!

I took the day off from work on Friday 2nd December to get things organised for the weekend. There was a lot to do.

The day was spent by all wiring socket extensions, unloading exhibitor vans and generally making all those who popped in to say hello welcome. It was also an opportunity to show everyone Issue 0 of Retro Fusion.

We finished setting up the event around 11:30pm just as the hired security guard arrived (I am pretty convinced that some of the machines were played during the early hours of the morning by this guy, it would have been rude of him not to!).

I said my fare well to those who remained and made my way home - literally 3 minutes walk away. I was bushed.

The Weekend Day 1

Saturday morning started with a fry-up. Pete had stayed the night at my place and we both woke up early, the excitement getting the best of us, and tucked in to the country's traditional first meal of the day.

We got to the venue just before 8am with the

intention of getting things up and running before the doors opened at 10:30am. Some exhibitors were yet to arrive, so I also wanted to make sure I was there to welcome them and help get their areas set-up.

The Jamma+ boys

(www.jammaplus.com) arrived early. Julian, the administrator / owner of the Jamma+ website and forum, had brought 12 of his own arcade cabinets to the event. Their exhibit comprised of a large marquee with over 20 cabinets surrounding its perimeter. The inside of the marquee was used over the weekend as a repair centre for a number of the PCB boards that failed.

The Jamma+ boys also had an amazing PA system that was used to pump out music over the weekend as well as being

Contacting the Stars!

I had met Jon Hare at Retrovision V earlier in the year and persuaded him to write a column for Retro Revival Issue 4. I dropped Jon an E-mail asking if he would attend the event. He replied that he would definitely come if he were available. Jon brought Richard Joseph along to the event.

An 'ANuttal' had purchased a Retro Ball ticket from me via Paypal. I asked the ANuttal via E-mail if he was in fact the 'Andy Nuttal' from the old Bullfrog camp. It was and my celeb list grew by 1.

I fired an E-mail off to David Whittaker and Rob Hubbard telling them all about The Retro Ball. David was up for the event very early on and between us we persuaded to get Rob to make the journey down from Hull to Warwickshire.

Archer Maclean took a number of his infamous restored arcade cabinets to CGEUK last summer. I made a point of introducing myself to him and the result of that conversation saw him promising to come to The Retro Ball. I thereafter sent him an E-mail that in turn led to a number of very pleasant telephone conversations with one of my retro developer heroes.

I started to have some obscure E-mail from a poliver from Blitz Games. I was polite in response unsure who this strange person was. He wished me well with my venture and I thanked him asking him if he intended to come. He then mentioned his twin brother....Oh how I laughed when I realised who I had been communicating with. Both Philip and Andrew attended the event.

THE DOORS OPENED AT 10.30AM WITH THE EVENT FORMERLY OPENED BY PHIL OLIVER

used to make important announcements. Julian switched on each of the cabinets in turn and played an appropriate track on the PA system. The arcade experience was born...

I went around each of the exhibits and switched on each of the machines and screens. All the usual suspects were present with a myriad of games available for each appropriate to each zone. In the Driving Zone were the likes of Outrun 2 on a dual XBOX setup and Crazy Taxi on the Dreamcast; the Fighting Zone saw Street Fighter 2 on the Snes and Soul Calibur on the Dreamcast; the Shoot Em Zone had Radiant Silvergun on a MAME PC and Raiden on the Playstation; the Christmas Zone played Sega Nights on the Saturn and Robocod 2 on the Amiga 1200 - and so the list went on and on.

The Pinball Zone was filled with 9 full size Pinball tables and 15 wonderful Pachinko machines that hypnotised and dazzled all who saw and played them.

Philip Oliver arrived with a number of PCs to showcase the finalist games in the coding competition that they had kindly sponsored. The competition was held in conjunction with the Remakes.org community and fantastic prizes were up for grabs including an elusive XBOX 360 console.

The doors opened at 10:30am with the event formerly opened by Phil Oliver just before 11am.

Jon Hare and Richard Joseph arrived and made their way upstairs to set up their area to demo and talk about Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll - the Sensible Software game that never quite saw the light of day. All those who saw it over the weekend were quietly shocked at some of the graphical images the Amiga game portrayed. Jon was selling

CDs of the music of the game that many purchased over the weekend.

By lunch time the venue was buzzing with attendees.

The Q/A session with the invited celebrities took place at 3pm. Initial PA problems did not dampen the on looking enthusiastic crowd as they fired question upon question onto the panel that comprised of The Oliver Brothers, Rob Hubbard, Richard Joseph, Jon Hare, Andy Nuttal and Archer Maclean (A video of the Q/A session can be downloaded from www.retrofusion.co.uk). The Q/A session was the highlight of the weekend for many, including myself.

Thereafter Andrew Oliver spoke on "How Gaming has changed since the early 1980's" and his brother Philip presented the aforementioned XBOX 360 to Chris XXXX, the writer of 'Horace and The Spiders' - an awesome remake of the Psion classic.

Day one of the event finished at midnight after a drunken 'Mashed' competition on one of the main projectors and 4-player Donkey Konga.

Day 2- The Day After the Day Before!

In traditional retro 2-day event style, Sunday was a much more calmer day than the Saturday. Many of the visitors were nursing hangovers and sore fingers from all the joystick and button bashing of the day before.

By lunch time the event was buzzing again with visitors and the arcade experience was created once again for all to embrace.

The day was rounded off just before 5pm with the Arcade Cabinet raffle that was part-donated to the event by www.ultimarc.com. The winner of the cabinet was Andrew Fisher, freelance writer and avid gamer in the retro world.

And then it was over.

Conclusion

From an organisers perspective the event was a resounding success. The feedback from those who attended the event, plus the write-ups in commercial magazines since, has convinced us that we did achieve our goals for The Retro Ball, i.e. create an environment of arcade bliss not seen or experienced since the 1980's and early 1990's by those who attended.

And we must not forget that the event proceeds of The Retro Ball (just short of £800) went to the Everyman charity - the main reason behind the weekend of gaming nirvana.

And will there be a 2006 event. Of course there will - this time though it will be called "Retro Fusion: A Weekend of Gaming!" and will take place once again at The Wardens, in Kenilworth, over the weekend of the 30th September. If you want to be taken back to the sounds and sights of your youth make sure you get to the show - tickets can be purchased on line at www.retrofusion.co.uk. See you there!!

THE IDEA WAS TO CREATE AN ARCADE BASED ON THOSE I USED TO FREQUENT

EXHIBITORS ATTENDING THE SHOW INCLUDED

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RETRO BALL

Facts about the Retro Ball No-one Knows

- My wife was nearly 3-months pregnant whilst at the event
- Gary Whelan played Galaxian at The Retro Ball on a JAMMA cabinet. Within the cabinet was the Galaxian PCB that Gary played when achieving his world record.
- Andy Brown from Console Passion had suspected Malaria 3-days before the event
- 5 Pachinko pinball machines were purchased over the weekend
- Over £250 was spent on cabling, gang blocks and RCDs
- The power kept going off on the Friday afternoon when setting-up. Thankfully this issue was resolved.
- The collection cans from Everyman turned up the Monday after the show - over a week after being sent to me.
- 5 Pachinko machines were sold
- No Pinball tables were sold - the sold stickers on the tables were there to inform potential buyers that they were not available.
- 1 exhibitor did not turn up
- The Pacman cabinet belonging to Blitz Games was restored and sold to them by Archer Maclean

Surely there was something missing with this game (a term I later found out to be called playability)...

The naivety of youth is something that you lose, as you grow older, thankfully. In my teens back home in West Wales I felt protected. My family were around me to cushion me from the outside world and all the stuff that was bad in the world seemed to happen a long way away in other countries.

At the tender age of 13 I received my ZX Spectrum for Christmas along with the games Manic Miner and Lunar Jetman. These two titles were recommended to me by a school colleague as he had been given a Spectrum 6 months before for his birthday and boy were they good. Both games were played continually over the holiday period with Manic Miner becoming one of my all time favourite Sinclair games.

I managed to get to the later stages of Manic Miner and with Lunar Jetman, if I'm totally honest, I never really understood what the overall objective of the game was until I was a little older, yet at the time it was still fun flying around shooting blocks of colour on the screen.

After weeks of playing these gems it was time for a change.

The family used to go shopping every weekend in the local shopping town of Carmarthen some 13 miles away. Tesco was the shop of choice for my parents, for me it was WH Smiths and Woolworths and a little Newsagent at the top of town where I used to buy my weekly can of orange Fanta.

My Speccy had been purchased at WH Smiths some weeks previous in the run-up to Christmas and it was here I went to look for my next gaming purchase.

In the far end corner of the store, next to the chart records and LP's, was the computer section. Here I found a rack from the floor to the ceiling with row upon row of empty cassette cases adjoined with colourful inlays. On

the inlay front was found the name of the game in a big bold letters, the system the game would run on and underneath the text, a graphical portrayal of the game. Towards the back could be found a textual description of the adventure you would be taken on if you were brave enough to buy the game and load it on your system of choice.

Now lets remember that at this time I had only had the pleasure of seeing and playing two games on my Spectrum and both were incredibly good. On looking and reading the inlay descriptions of the games before me I had no doubt that every single one I was presented with was of equal quality and value for money as the two I already owned. Why should I not think differently? Surely the producers of these games would not lie to me with their claims of "Game of the Year!" and "Shockingly realistic!" So in my mind back then it was a matter of choosing what kind of game I would like to play – the quality and game play were furthest from my mind as they were an assumed part of the package.

I spent a good while choosing the game I wanted to play, very reminiscent of the way I walk around and around Blockbuster these days when choosing a movie.

Finally I chose one. It was called 'Devils of the Deep' and was produced by a company called Richard Shepherd Software. The cover promised "A stunning 3-D graphic adventure for the 48k Spectrum" and depicted a diver shooting at a massive eel. It looked superb and I couldn't wait to play it.

After the short journey home, I rushed up to my bedroom and fired up my Speccy and TV (well switched them on). In went the tape, I typed LOAD "" on the keyboard and then pushed the play button on the tape



recorder.

The obligatory few minutes passed as the game loaded during which time I took the opportunity to read the instructions on the cassette inlay - see boxout for a rundown of the world I was about to explore in "Devils of the Deep".

The loading screen appeared after a minute or so and some text set the scene for the game. All looked very promising.

I started playing the "Devils of the Deep" and invested a good couple of hours exploring the city of Atlantis. I was

desk that I would like to exchange the game I had purchased from them the previous week, as it would not load. The assistant then, to my horror, put the tape into the tape deck connected to the on-display Spectrum and started to load

it to verify my story. The minutes ticked by; the game continued to load flawlessly; beads of sweat started to form on my young forehead. During this time a queue of people had started to form at the counter and the assistant had to go back to serve the less than patient customers. As he did so, and ensuring that he was not looking, I pressed the pause button on the tape recorder to stop the tape. I then pressed the pause button again to continue the tape playing.

The assistant came back to face "R Tape Loading Error" on the TV.

"See I told you", I said.

Sheepishly, the assistant said I could choose another game as a replacement. The one I chose was "Hall of Things" that proved to be a much better purchase even though, again I chose the game based on its influential cover and its text/screen-shots.

The cover promised "A stunning 3D graphic adventure for the 48k Spectrum"

confused. Surely there was something missing with this game (a term I later found out to be called 'playability'). I kept on thinking 'is this it?'. The game was slow, unattractive to the eye and sounded awful. These were not adjectives used on the cassette inlay that so enticed me to buy this game. I felt tricked and realised that maybe what you see, or what you are led to believe, is not what you will necessarily receive by the game publishers.

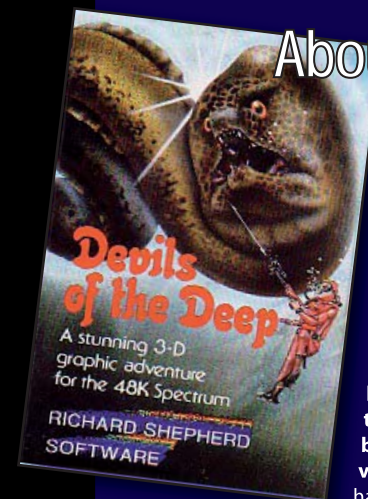
My parents suggested I took the game back to the shop as £6.50 was a lot of money to waste on something that would never get played. The problem was that WH Smiths had signs up everywhere stating that software could only be returned if unopened. I would give it a go anyway.

The following Saturday I made my way to the computer counter at WH Smiths, put on my searching for sympathy face, and told the lone assistant at the

Soon after this little experience, I started to buy Sinclair User magazine, and a little later on, Crash magazine primarily for their reviews of the latest games. I was not so naïve as I once was in believing that you would always get value for money from a product you spent all your pocket money on even when the product had 'buy me now!' packaging and promised to take you on an adventure of a life time.

Richard Shepherd software helped me to have a little less of a rose-tinted view of the world that we know and since the purchase of Devils of the Deep I always seek someone else's opinion on a product before purchase.

So thank you Richard Shepherd, wherever you are, but my advice to you is this, "beware of the marketing devils of the deep; they are after your money!"



About the Game

As an intrepid underwater explorer you are expected to explore the lost city of Atlantis in order to find some lost treasure and once located you have to bring it safely back to your salvage vessels. You have 100 3d-screens to explore - as you

move off the side of the screen (cursor keys for movement) the adjacent one in the 10x10 grid is displayed.

During the game you will quickly encounter your worst nightmare – the Devils of the Deep. Simply put these are very large electric eels intent on making you their supper. They are not easy to kill – only a direct hit between their gnashing jaws will do. The alternative is to scarper into one of the adjacent screens and hide behind one of the towers there hoping the eel won't follow. For a sudden injection of speed hold down the CAPS SHIFT key – but watch your strength as doing this will weaken you dramatically. To increase your strength you will need to eat the seaweed that is scattered around. You will have to cut the seaweed with a knife which will first have to be located.

There are a variety of objects that you can collect to aid you on your quest. A maximum of 6 objects can be carried at any one time so use the 'p' and 'd' key to pick up and drop objects diligently. Objects that can be found include a spade for digging up buried treasure, harpoon gun and harpoons for killing those eels, Knife, spade and compass that tells you which way you're facing.

Additionally you can find oxygen tanks on the seabed that once picked up will increase your air supply by 20 minutes.

Another underwater hazard that will be found are giant crabs – treat this ginormous beasts with the respect and contempt they deserve.

So there we have it – sounds like a fantastic game doesn't it. I thought that too until I started playing it.

From Crash Magazine: 3D graphic adventure where you move your undersea diver along the seabed avoiding electric eels and crabs, collect useful items like harpoon guns and harpoons, knives and compasses, and try to collect the treasure hidden somewhere. There are 100 screens to be traversed. The idea is a good one but the graphics are uninspiring and very, very slow. Long load and minutes to wait if you are killed before another game may be played. Below average.

DEVILS OF THE DEEP

A tale of Intrigue, Deception, greed and an extremely rubbish Spectrum game



Above | Screenshot

The loading screen - not the best example in the world, but it sets the scene nicely.



Above | Screenshot

Yes, this is the main game. Absolutely dreadful graphics that are re-drawn everytime, object by object, when you move the main character - the red blobby thing.

THE A-TEAM

If you have a problem, if no one else can help and if you can find him then maybe Billy Withers is your man

It's a show that is loved like family and has a cast list that resembles a pick'n'mix sweet selection, but saying that, it was one of the best pieces of action packed TV in the 80s. Billy Withers takes a flight through the world of the A-Team (although Mr T couldn't join him as apparently he doesn't like to fly).

The Beginning

What were you doing in 1972? This question, of course, is only relevant if indeed you are old enough to have been around at that time. If you look back at that year you soon find out that some pretty significant events happened - the UK government, for example, declared a state of emergency in February when miners decided to strike; in April the first mobile phone was used in New York and in August that year Geri Halliwell was born... well, ok not EVERYTHING was world changing.

But most importantly in 1972 a team of crack military commandos were sent to court for a crime that they didn't commit. They subsequently escaped to the Los Angeles underground only to survive as soldiers of fortune. "If you have a problem, if no one else can help, and if you can find them, then maybe you can hire the A-TEAM!!!" (cue music).

The show that crossed Blue Peter, Scrapheap Challenge and the make-it table to come up with the most bizarre "kill all the enemies and save the day" machinery ever seen. Yet only two people in the ENTIRE series were killed - General Fallbright fell at the end of the fourth and in the final season Gianni Christian, a gangster, fell in Lethal Weapon 2 style to his death in a swimming pool from a hotel balcony.

The A-Team made its world debut on the 23rd of January 1983 on American network NBC and was thereafter snapped up by a huge number of TV stations across the world.

For UK viewers, 5.45pm on a Saturday evening was prime time TV viewing as we watched Hannibal Smith, B.A. Baracus, Face, and Murdock make the world a better place by eradicating the problems of everyday folk in their neighbourhood.

Not your regular programming

Coming from the stables of Stephen J. Cannell the show ran for a total of 4 years with the final episode being aired on March 8th 1987.

The A-Team has everything that your typical young audience craved for from a TV programme - comedy, military undertones, machine guns and, most importantly of all, good old fashioned fighting.

The 4 men of the GMC truck-alypse were all convicted for a crime that they did not commit. What actually happened was that their Commanding Officer in Vietnam gave them an order to rob the Hanoi Bank in a hope to end the conflict, but when the men returned from their successful mission they found that their commander had been slain by the Vietcong and their HQ reduced to ashes. With no evidence that they were indeed working under orders, the men were arrested and sent to court, from which they would escape and become mercenaries for our entertainment.

Theres no I in team

The show is great for both kids and grown ups alike. It says something about the qualities of The A-Team that when watching an episode you find yourself screaming "YAY" when B.A. puts to rest the dastardly work of a young punk; or you wonder if Hannibal will pull it off with another one of his mad disguises; or if Face would find another woman to fall under his spell; or if Murdock was gonna really piss off the gold-wearing powerhouse again. The flashes and bangs of all the stunts, every one of them in slow motion, was what we looked forward to in each episode and in that respect it never disappointed. We were all too young back then to actually notice if anyone was getting killed or not which maybe wasn't such a bad thing.

The Cast

Who can forget the closing signature of each episode with Hannibal



Smith, cigar in hand, quipping "I love it when a plan comes together".

John "Hannibal" Smith is played by the late, great, George Peppard. Peppard had starred in many B movies and had a major starring role alongside Audrey Hepburn in Breakfast at Tiffany's, before ending up on the A-Team. George was himself a former member of the U.S. Marine Corps,



so that would have put him in good stead to be the leading man of this 4 man army. Sadly, he died in 1994, aged 65 of pneumonia, brought on by complications of his treatment for lung cancer.

The second member of this band of merry men is Lt. Templeton "Face-man" Peck, played by Dirk Benedict. Face was originally played by Tim Dunigan in the pilot of the A-Team with Dirk being drafted in for the eventual series. Mr Benedict, born Mr Niewoehner (his name was changed as a result of him needing a catchier surname and his agent getting the



inspiration from Dirk's breakfast on the morning of their meeting), was also a man of the screen before he appeared on the "Team", most notably appearing in Battlestar Galactica as Starbuck. Dirk is still alive and kicking to this day.

Contestant number 3 is H.M. (Howling Mad) Murdock, or Dwight Schultz to the real world. Dwight will also be known for his role as Lt. Reginald Barclay in Star Trek: The Next Generation, but what is more impres-



sive is his credentials for gaming and cartoon voices. His voicing talent has been in the brilliant anime Princess Mononoke, Family Guy, Johnny Bravo and the games Final Fantasy X, X-2. He is also soon to be appearing in Psychonauts on the current gen consoles. Last, but certainly not least is Lau-

rence Tureaud, or Mr T. as we all know him. This former bouncer became the brawn of the outfit, Sgt. Bosco Albert (B.A.) Baracus. Mr T., who is a born-again Christian, starred in Rocky III in 1982, before making his appearance on our screens as the man who pitied fools. He had his own cartoon show in 1983, which ran for 16 episodes, an album called Mr T's Commandments (a good moral message rap special which lasted 7 tracks) and he also appeared in Wrestlemania 1 and 2. There is a rumour that he could be returning to our screens as Clubber Lang in the new Rocky film, but that is still just that at the moment.

The extras

There have been other members of the A-Team besides the fab four. Melinda Culea (Amy Amanda "Triple A" Allen) was a reporter who was a part of the team from the offset, but as time went on, she began to fall out with the people behind the cameras and was written out midway through the second season. Maria Heasley played Amy's replacement character briefly in 1984. The only other "member" was Eddie Valez who played Puerto Rican pyrotechnic man, Frankie "Dishpan" Santana. Unfortunately, his character just didn't work in the show that well.

Then we come to the men who were looking for Hannibal and his troops. You have Colonel Lynch, the Commander of Fort Bragg (the stockade from which the A-Team broke out off) played by William Luchter. He was their pursuer during the first season, but alas, unable to apprehend them. A new season and time for a new Colonel! (Colonel Decker played by Lance LeGault) who chased after them for the rest of the programmes run. He didn't manage to catch them either. Hannibal and his team eventually ran out of luck and were caught by General Hunt Stockwell, played by The Man from U.N.C.L.E.'s Robert Vaughn, with the A-Team having to do jobs for him in return for their

freedom, which was granted in the big finale of the series.

Mr DDT

Mr T's appearance in two of the WWE flagship events was a product of an agreement between the then World Wrestling Federation and the programme makers. This then led to appearances in The A-team by a list of famous wrestlers such as Hulk Hogan, Davey Boy Smith (the British Bulldog), the Dynamite Kid, Bobby "the Brain" Heenan and "Mean" Gene Okerlund.

Wrestlers, however were not the only celebrities to make cameo appearances (I won't mention Boy George). Other big names include Lance Henriksen, Dennis Haysbert, Isaac Hayes and Michael Ironside.

The phenomenon that is the A-Team has reached and stayed at cult status for many, many years. Even now The A-Team merchandise engine is at full throttle with new dolls, gadgets and die-cast miniatures making regular updated appearances in the high street stores.

Epilogue

The A-Team has not just been a major influence on people's lives, it has also affected the way action television has been made over the years and has cemented itself upon the media culture of today. It is something that will live in our hearts for a long, long time to come. We can only hope that the rumours are true that the surviving members of the show could be meeting up for a reunion show. I love it when a plan comes together.

So, 1972, not a bad year really. If only they could have stopped the prospect of 5 evil women subjecting the British public to 'Girl Power' by allowing B.A. to rap to Geri and thus saving us a hell of a lot of sore ears 26 years later.



Above | Colonel Decker
A man on a mission and a constant irritant to the A-Team. Not to be confused with Carol Decker, lead singer of T-Pau and constant irritant to us all in the late 80s. "Chinaaa in your haaaaand..."

Below | The Soundtrack
Yes, there was a soundtrack, featuring that distinctive theme tune. The theme has become an 80s anthem and used in numerous situations since, including a recent telephone directory advert and a brilliant spoofed rave version in the comedy, Spaced.



The show that crossed Blue Peter, Scrapheap Challenge and the Make-it table

THE A-TEAM

THE VAN

Now a big part of the A-Team series was not actually human. The black GMC van was a show-stopper nearly every week of the series' run. It was actually a brand new GMC G-Series model when it first appeared in 1983. The G-Series was available in 3 variations, each with different weights, varying from half a ton to a complete ton. The one used in the show was the lighter G-15 model. There were only ever two of these kept in pristine condition for things like story shots or the odd close-up, with both of them being owned by the show's producer/creator, Stephen J Cannell, right up until 1992 when one of them was sold to a TV and film vehicle museum, with the other ones whereabouts unknown. The top of the van was covered in strong 3M tape for action scenes that involved stuntmen jumping down onto the vehicle.

An interesting fact about the van is that in order to successfully get the wheels to spin and to give that authentic 'gung-ho' feeling, the prop department would put bleach both onto the tyres themselves and pour some just in front as well so as to produce a load of smoke to achieve these burn-out effects.

The show had GMC's sponsorship money coming in for most of the programmes run, but during the last season of the A-Team GMC withdrew their sponsorship due to their badge being taken off the van by the A-Team producers. Initially the van had a badge on the front and sides. The front badge was removed and the side one painted over with black paint (for the eagle eyed amongst you, try looking around the rear door on the left hand side of the van).



Engine - A 350 CID engine with modifications done to the carburettor and exhaust system.

Wheels - 15" turbine style tyres. Painted black with red stripe trim.

Colour - Main van colour is semi-gloss black, with the top half consisting of a semi-gloss dark gun metal grey and, of course, the red stripe along the sides, the rim of the bonnet and on the spoiler at the back.

Modifications made - exterior sun visor added, quad headlight conversion, fog/driving lights added, custom made rear wings made and quad square exhaust tips added. Air shock absorbers in the rear to improve the van's handling.

Interior alterations - Custom made Naugahide bucket seats added, as well as a shag-pile carpet and a gun case in the back, for when trouble comes calling (consisting of Stainless Steel Ruger Mini 14's with a side eject and paratrooper folding stocks, two of which were modified to be fully automatic)

GAMES

With a huge licence like the A-Team, you would think that some big game companies of the time would be jumping at the chance to get at this potential gold mine franchise. Well actually that's not what happened. There were, as far as memory and information can tell us, three A-Team titles in total with one appearing on the Atari 2600, one on the Commodore 64 and our final entrant coming in on the Spectrum and Amstrad formats.

First up we have the Atari 2600 title, which kind of mixes Mr T with Futurama, with his head floating around killing monsters which could only have appeared in his nightmares

after being drugged to be put on a plane, either that or Face should have left Starbuck at home (that's a Bat-lestar Galactica reference, just in case three people didn't know). Then we see Mr T's bonce take on a little green man and I would be guessing that the game does not seem to get any more normal, not like it was to start with. We can only guess it was Murdock that programmed it.

Next up we have the C64 version and the less said about that one, the better. Courbois Software unleashed this and were then hunted down and tortured with steel pitchforks for their cruelty to humans. The game featured four floating heads, now

apparently becoming a stable part of the A-Team gaming diet, which would spew missiles at our little character who's job it was to shoot these nasty noggins - with no sound, no music, or no background. There is no fun in this game. AVOID!

Then out of nowhere came an A-Team game that actually LOOKED like something you would associate with crack commandos and the lack of an ability to hit a barn door. This time it was an Operation Wolf style shooting game on the CPC and Spectrum for one or two players, which wasn't too bad. Pity the loading screen made Face look more like Terry Wogan on a bad day.



TOYS

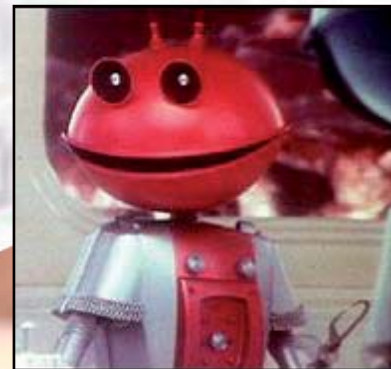
Hannibal, Face and the others, like anyone else in a TV show at the time, were immortalised in plastic and thrown around by kids of the day.

The A-Team dolls were made by the US toy experts, Galoob. They were manufacturers of the world famous Micro Machines and the also famous, but not for the same reasons, Game Genie and pretty much produced all manner of items for the main character dolls to interact with including

the GMC Van and the red and white Corvette driven by Face.

The figures came in three different sizes namely three and three quarter inch, six inch and 12 inch. Only B.A. Baracus was in the latter category, such was his popularity at the time.

Check out E-bay for some fantastic bargains on the cult vintage toys or take a look at <http://www.empire-islanduk.com> for some of the more recent releases.



RETRO ADVERT FOR MASH GET SMASH!

SPANNER SPENCER TAKES A LOOK back at the impact smash instant mash had on us.

For over 15 years, the living rooms of Britain rang with the sweet metallic mirth of Cadbury's potato obsessed robots. These tin plated culinary connoisseurs achieved that most prestigious, if somewhat self nullifying, accolade of surpassing the popularity of the very product they were commissioned to promote. But surpass it they did, and there has not been a 'top 100' or 'nation's favourite' poll of memorable adverts that has not featured the Smash Martian's somewhere in its top five.

To my knowledge, I have never tried instant mashed potatoes. The idea that preparing something as gastronomically unadventurous as mashed potato could be a chore for even the tamest of 1950s nuclear housewives just doesn't ring true. I have never stood over a cooker with one eye on a pan of boiling vegetables and the other on my watch, screaming "COOK, YOU LUMPY IRISH BASTARDS!", and have therefore never felt the need to relieve my limited cooking duties with a bag of pre-mashed, dehydrated starch powder. At least, I wouldn't have, if those magnificent Martians hadn't tempted me by callously guffawing about my home town of Huddersfield in the 1970s.

How must the brain child of this, and many other legendary advertisements, felt when the commission landed on his desk?

"Instant mashed potatoes? I wasn't away that ordinary mashed potatoes were... gradual." But this man, the late great John Webster, was charged with convincing you, me and Holly Housewife that their laborious kitchen toils could be alleviated with a simple packet 'o mash. And though he may not have entirely convinced us to substitute the potato for boiling water and sand, he certainly immortalised the product with a subtly ingenious slice of comic sci-fi

From across the gulf of space, minds immeasurably indifferent to ours studied our eating habits with quizzical eyes. During a well earned break from Coronation Street, we were given a back seat view of a cadre of visiting alien robot's first report on our newly discovered civilisation. Curious about Earth's cuisine, their leader asks what they discovered on

their last visit. A humble potato is held aloft in a claw that appears decidedly ferocious for such jovial machines (though a keen engineer would probably realise its sole purpose is a simple method of holding root vegetables), and is told 'they eat a great many of these'.

It's at this point that we really got to know our Martian publicists as the bright and breezy jokesters they are as a snigger permeates the small band of Dalek wannabes. At first, the mirth is kept safely under their breath (assuming robots perform such a function as breathing), but their infectious laughter becomes harder to stifle as the report tells how humans 'peel them with their metal knives' (sly looks are cast about the table as the laughter increases in pugnacity), 'boil them for twenty of their minutes' (open guffawing with heads thrown back and elbows to each others tin ribs), then finally 'smash them into tiny bits'. This is too much for the 'appy androids and they roll about on the floor and bang their heads on the tables at the hilarity of our pointless potato preparing practices. Their leader finally answers his own question about the evolutionary status of the human race - 'They are clearly a most primitive people!'

storage room, and have been restored and put on display alongside other national treasures such as sets from Wallace and Gromit and full size Daleks. Such is the Smash Martian's status in the history of British television.

As to the reasons for their advertising success and subsequent fame (found independently of the product they were selling), it's hard to place a specific reason as to their appeal. When looking at the actual content of the adverts, particularly in reference to other advertising techniques of the time, John Webster stretched the rules to their elastic limits by essentially ridiculing the customer. All the talk of 'primitive people' and, quite frankly, impolite mockery of their eating habits could just as easily offend a prudish British viewer. In retrospect, it appears not to have been a fluke, as much of Webster's work contained a similar indefinable quality that endeared his creations to the public without making it obvious to them.

It seems he harboured a talent for understanding the subtleties of the British psyche, choosing seemingly obscure icons to accompany the products he was advertising, yet creating an immediate identity that appealed to us; without ever questioning why. Other advertising personalities

...IT TOOK THREE PUPPETEERS TO OPERATE EACH MARTIAN USING A CABLE SYSTEM CONSTRUCTED FROM BIKE BRAKES.



Above | **Fruit Machine**
How about an instant way to throw good money away? Just don't go clogging up the coin slot with Smash when it doesn't pay out the jackpot.



Above | **Smash Original**
So you're too lazy to get a few spuds, boil and then mash them? Here's the answer to your prayers. Just add water.



Above | **Honey Monster**
No stranger to the TV screens up until very recently, the Honey Monster is another of John Webster's creations.

STARWARS TOYS

Billy Withers' interest in Starwars toys takes him to a Galaxy far, far Away....



Above | Uzay
All countries had their own 'tweaks' to the basic packaging. The 'Uzay' packs were originally Turkish in origin and are regarded by collectors for their comedic value. Check out the package above... Yes, that control panel really is a thinly disguised calculator



Above | 12" Stormtrooper
As well as the 3 3/4" range of figurines, Kenner also produced a series of 12" figures. The Stormtrooper packaging above with 'door' type flap is typical

Star Wars was a life-changing movie for many of its viewers back in 1977 and is still much loved by the people of that generation as well as by a mass of new fans, both young and old.

After the release of the first film, George Lucas negotiated a deal where he got 40% of the movie's takings and full merchandising rights instead of the standard director's cut (no pun intended). When it was found out that Lucas had requested this, there were rumours that some producers at Fox laughed. Oh how wrong could they have been.

The Star Wars movie went on to make history and attract a cult following and so too did the toys that were manufactured to compliment the film. The company that got the contract, Kenner, were a small Cincinnati toy making outfit created by three brothers Joseph, Albert and Philip Steiner in 1946. The name Kenner actually came from a street name in their city. They originally specialised in Bubble Gums and were the sellers of well-known brands like Play-Doh and Spirograph. It was in 1977, however, when Kenner would really hit the big time thanks to a wealthy director man with a strange space story to tell.

Kenner was lucky, however, as they were not actually the first toy company to be selected by Lucas to get the chance to design and make the new Star Wars collectables for kids. That privilege went to the Mego Corporation who were offered the contract in 1976. It is no surprise that they were George's first choice as the company, started in the 1950's by David Abrams, had been making character miniatures and other items for films and TV since 1971. Their port-

folio held, amongst others, Star Trek, Planet of the Apes and the Wizard of Oz. David decided to decline the offer. Due to that one poor decision, the Mego Corporation filed for bankruptcy in 1982 and the company itself died a year later, while Kenner on the other hand went from strength to strength.

Kenner made toy history by introducing a range of figurines based on the Star Wars franchise that were 3 3/4 inches in length. After the success of the Star Wars merchandising machine, all the future movie and TV figurines created adopted the same measurement. This is not to say that the 3.75 inch figures were all that were released by Kenner, however. There were also 12-inch deluxe models made of our favourite Star Wars characters and big play sets to stage them in.

After the release of the first film, George Lucas negotiated a deal where he got 40% of the movie takings and full merchandising rights

The smaller figures were housed in a plastic, "bubble" container, nicknamed due to its shape, with the back made of cardboard. On the front of the packaging was the Star Wars title centred and located at the top. To the right of the toy, and making up pretty much the rest of the front of the packaging, was an action pose of the character taken from the movie. On the back of the card was the obligatory advert to persuade the purchaser to collect the whole set of figures and in the case of the Episode IV figures, a marketing ploy was hatched

to encourage you to buy at least 4 figures from the set, qualifying you to send away for the limited edition Boba Fett figure that was not available in the shops – a toy collectors dream.

The packaging that housed the figures for each of the original trilogy of films had a similar layout with a few exceptions. The packs that contained more than one figure were usually pretty plain with no action pose to attract the attention of the potential buyer. Others had the logo of the film in triplicate on the front, most notably on the Return of the Jedi packs. These were units that were made/and or sold outside of the USA. Certain special edition packs also had commemorative coins and were known as the Star Wars: Power of the Force figures and were continued to be made many years after the original trilogy.

The twelve inch figures were housed in a cardboard box with a door type flap that could be opened to reveal the Star Wars character inside. More recently there have been Collectors Editions released that were also in card boxes adjourned with a Star Wars Collector's gold medal printed on its front, reinforcing the fact that the toy was an authentic collectable.

There were also single, double and even quadruple figure packs released to coincide with the release

of the prequels. Some of the more notable packs included Wampa, the ice yeti, from The Empire Strikes Back and a double Sith pack with Darth Vader and Darth Maul the box.

Modern times have seen the emergence of deluxe vinyl figurines and I am pleased to say that the Star Wars merchandising machine has produced extremely detailed models of the main characters of the movies in this way also.

Of course, the figurines of the past is where the real money is for the collector and there seems to be always people ready to sell the Star Wars toys they had as kids as well as the people who want to buy them.

The icing on the cake for a collector though is to get a Kenner in its original packaging. The trouble of course is that as kids the last thing you wanna play with is a cardboard box, so the first thing you do is rip the toy out of its casing thus devaluing the toy greatly.

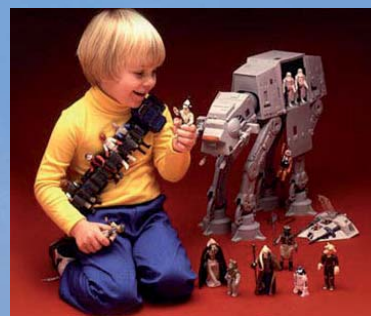
Now the figures are obviously what the kids went for due to them being affordable. To complement the figures, though, you always had to have the more expensive vehicles.

All 3 films had their collection of landmark vehicles from Land Speeders, X-Wing's and Millennium Falcon's associated with the first film to the AT-AT's and Scout Walker's in the Empire Strikes Back, working up to the Speeder Bikes and TIE interceptors in the Return of the Jedi. All these vehicles were translated into toys for the rich kids to play with and came fantastically packaged to boot, as can be seen in some of the images on these pages.

There were also some Die-Cast models done too, but these were small models and packaged in the "bubble" style.

"Vehicles are all fine and dandy", I hear you say, "I want more", I hear you scream. Well maybe the playsets that were available may calm down your craving for the 'next Star Wars thing'. The playsets were big, massive in some instances, and did their best to immerse the wannabe Jedi within a galaxy far, far away. With the playsets came another toy manufacturer who would work alongside Kenner to create some of the more popular "movie scene" settings. Palitoy Ltd was a UK based toy maker, based in Coalville, Leicestershire and were most notable for their Action Man figures. Palitoy made some of the larger playsets, the Death Star playset being one of their flagship products consisting of a few slats of card put together to create a 3D semi-circular machine of death with nicely drawn, tasteful interior.

A number of important scenes



within all of the 3 films were recreated in miniature form for the masses of kids in desperate need of a Star Wars fix.

There were also larger versions of some of the bigger creatures from the film released like the Dewbacks, the animals the Stormtroopers rode whilst patrolling, and the Tauntaun, the creature ridden by Han Solo and Luke in the Empire Strikes Back.

Another stalwart of the time would be the Lego figures of which there were tons of them, all with tiny light sabres

Left and Background | The AT-AT
The AT-AT, All Terrain Armoured Transport, appears in The Empire Strikes Back and briefly in Return of the Jedi - the ultimate imperial toy

and capes and all the other accessories associated with the little yellow plastic men.

The Star Wars collections have to date been the most collectible type of toys to have ever been released. To prove this, I decided to take a trip on everyone's favourite selling friend, eBay, to see what some of these items go for nowadays.

What I came across was a complete set of original Star Wars figures in little plastic bags that had reached a price of over £750 but STILL had not met the reserve. Other items included a full size Stormtrooper for £100 and an R2-D2 telephone for £51. Most of the big money, though, was being spent on auctions consisting of collectable groups of figure and were more or less hitting 3 figures on most occasions.

So there we have it, a cult phenomenon with a figure range that is just as desirable and memorable as the movies themselves. It comes as no surprise that they fetch unbelievable prices these days. What of tomorrow's



Top | Deathstar Playset
The Deathstar Space Station was the very first playset produced by Kenner and stood a full 20" tall with four floors.

Left | Boba Fett
The limited edition Boba Fett figure that you received after purchasing at least four 3 3/4" range

The Star Wars Collections have to date been the most collectable types of toys to have ever been released



Above | **The Tauntaun**
An example of the many creatures that were turned in to toys by Kenner. This example is the Tauntaun that appeared in The Empire Strikes Back

big collectables? You'll have the Lord of the Rings collectables which, given a few decades, will be R@RE as some people call it these days. You could also watch out for memorabilia from the movies that flopped as not many people are going to want a toy from that particular film. The theory is that if not a lot of people buy the toys from the failed film, then there won't be many around say in around 10 years time thus, in theory, increasing their re-sale value.

You could also try and get your hands on items from more well known films, TV shows and cartoons that can produce memorabilia that becomes a hard to product to find like for example an original Optimus Prime Transformer toy or maybe Lion-O from the Thundercats.

There are also many figures available based on comic book heroes so you never know, if you can get yourself the right toys now, they could give you back a really good return later on in life.

Get hunting people, there's rarities out there

Memorabilia Show

The Memorabilia Show is a bi-yearly event held at the NEC in Birmingham.

As well as a myriad of TV and film celebrities attending, there is a huge contingent of traders selling every conceivable item. For Star Wars fans looking to extend their collection of toys and memorabilia, the event is a god-send with traders selling both common and rare items at realistic prices.

The next event is over the weekend of the 25th and 26th March and we have every intention of attending and bringing you a full report next issue.

Check out www.memorabilia.co.uk for more details on this fantastic event.



Above | **Lightsabers**
The ultimate toy for the Star Wars fan. These are official reproduction models of the actual Lightsabers used in the Star Wars movies. The Jedi weapon of choice features realistic sound effects and a glowing blade that ignites with realistic power up/down effects. Why not go for the Darth Vader red saber if your feeling particularly mischievous or if your feeling in a very "I want to save the universe" mood go for a Luke green. The only negative thing that Retro Fusion can see with the Lightsaber is the price. At over \$100, they do not come cheap - check out www.thinkgeek.com for more details.

FUSION TOP 5

what were your favourite star wars toys? we list the ones we cherished the most



5 X-Wing Fighter

The X-Wing has been faithfully converted by Kenner to give every kid the chance to fly Luke to Yoda's planet of choice, Dagobah. Functioning laser lights on the nose with accompanying laser sound adds to the authenticity of this space ship.



4 Speeder Bike

Re-create the chase scene through the forests of Endor with this speeder bike with functioning handlebars and blow apart battle damage. Only room for one Star Wars figurine, not supplied of course.



3 Vadar Tie Fighter

Mr Darth Vader's very own customised Tie Fighter with its very own dramatic red laser light and whining laser sound. Battle damage can be simulated by pressing the appropriate button that sees the crafts laser panels drop off. The ship has a lever that once actioned raises Darth's cockpit seat.



2 AT-AT

The awesome AT-AT that first appeared in The Empire Strikes Back. This toy has the obligatory laser cannons that light up and pulsate. The cockpit at the front can hold two figurines whilst the main body compartment can transport up to ten.



1 Millennium Falcon

Everyones favourite space ship that has been regularly touted as Kenners flagship toy of the Star Wars collection. The rear deck lifts off to expose the inside compartments and gun turrets. The cockpit canopy panel also opens up and hold two figures.



Left | **Star Destroyer**
The Star Destroyer is recognised as being the signature vessel of the Imperial fleet

the
Millennium Falcon
Kenners flagship toy of
the star wars collection



Star Wars computer and video games have a chequered history and have seldom reached the heights achieved by their celluloid counterparts. In a bid to sort the Jedi Knights from the Jar Jar Binks we took a retrospective trawl through the very best and worst from the Star Wars universe. Ignoring recent releases, we tackled games written for hardware up to and including Sega's Dreamcast.

So, in no particular order, the best 5 are:

Super Empire Strikes Back (Super Nintendo)

Much like the movies, the second of the Snese games was the best of the bunch. This had a much more balanced feel to it, as well as a graphical overhaul.

Star Wars Racer (Nintendo 64, Dreamcast and PC)

If ever there was a game that was overlooked by the majority, it was this one. This was a great little pod racing title with speed and looks in abundance, especially if you had an expansion pack available for the N64 version.

X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter (PC)

The X-Wing and Tie Fighter series of games won many awards on the PC and it was loved by analogue joystick users the world over. Some people say that X-Wing vs. Tie Fighter though was the pick of them.

Star Wars (original Arcade)

The original Star Wars game deserves its place within the top 5 mainly because it achieved so much with so little for its time, with some basic vectors and plinky plonky music, helped by some speech, this game proved to be a very addictive Atari coin-op.

Star Wars: Jedi Knight (PC)

There haven't been many games that have managed to pull off first person killing with a good story and most importantly, the Star Wars franchise. This was one of the few that managed to make it work.

Now it's time for the top 5 turkeys, again in no particular order.

Star Wars: Episode 1 The Phantom Menace (PC and PSX)

This game did try to be good, but something must have happened that changed the plan. The birds eye perspective style really didn't help it much, neither did the boring gameplay that accompanied it. Shame really as it could have been so much better.

Star Wars: Masters of Teras Kasi (PSX)

Here's the idea, fellas. We make a game like Tekken, which is currently popular, to which we put in a Star Wars licence. It can't go wrong, I'm telling ya. Guess what... It did.

Star Wars: Rebel Assault 1 and 2 (Mega CD, 3DO, PSX, PC)

Oh dear. This was a poor man's Dragon's Lair. Move ship, then move human, then move something else. Add to this FMV that was grainier than Shredded Wheat and a really bad control system and it made a recipe for disaster.

Star Wars: _____ (GBA)

One format that has suffered more than any other to get a decent Star Wars game on it has been the humble Gameboy Advance, which has just not had a good time of it with regards to having fun with "The Force". Just tell your kids they're broken Lego bricks.

Star Wars: Episode 1 - Battle for Naboo (PC, Nintendo 64)

Another one that suffered from nice idea, not enough thought. A game that was stuck in-between the decent Shadows of the Empire and the rather good Starfighter series. Could have been so much better had they bothered to do anything with it.





Alten8 – The Alternative Developer And Publisher – WWW.ALTEN8.COM

Alten8 is proud to give you a taster of the games coming your way during 2006, on various formats! Some retro games, based on our 500+ licensed retro titles, as well as all new games to inspire, and enjoy. From GBA to PC, to phone titles and more to come Alten8 brings you fresh new games, from its own development team, and by working with some of the freshest new talent out there, if you have a game you would like to see published, why not contact us and tell us more!



Oracle – A Mobile Adventure – A Classic RPG action game, in a GBA style, made for gamers, by gamers, Oracle is the phone game you have to get in 2006! Stylish graphics, a great music score, and so much more - this is the game REAL gamers have been waiting for on a phone, well wait no longer, Oracle is here! Coming on phone and other formats soon!



Opals Quest - Unleash your imagination in Opal's Quest, a medieval fantasy RPG, and explore the Faerhen Earths in search of your worst enemy, the cruel troll Mephisto. Visit many towns and villages, and travel through deep forests, forgotten ruins and hidden dungeons. During your journey, you will have to battle fearsome creatures, avoid deadly traps and resolve many riddles, but fortunately you will meet friendly and weird characters ready to help you in your quest.



Office Massacre – For Phones - Ever had a bad day at work ?? Well take out your frustration on this phone game instead – a classic cult game in the making, office massacre is a tongue in cheek phone game you will love, shoot the office workers, and police trying to stop you from getting through to the Boss, using your shot gun. Its only a fun cartoon game, that's all you have to tell yourself... just some fun



Mr Beanbag – he's fun, his fast, and he is very cute !! Rated 88% out of a hundred by Retro Gamer Magazine, this hero for a new generation is making his way to you Summer 2006, on a range of retro and current formats, more speed than Sonic, more man than Mario, Mr Beanbag is coming to save the day !! This is a game for kids, and even bigger kids !!



Release Date.....06/06/06..... Evil has a new enemy....the wrong man, in the wrong place, nothing will ever be the same again in his lifeif he loses, his life is gone, if he wins then watch out Evil, he will be coming after you all.....there will be no hiding place!
To be released on a range of formats, from the mind of creator Paul Andrews, comes an all new game, and an all new story the first in a string of games which will evolve the character, and grow the games.....and you thought Laura kicked butt... !!!



It's a crazy 3D, top down GT Race, coming soon to GBA and other formats in its original 3D Crazy Racer format also, this tyre burning, speed crazed racing game, set over many tracks, and the chance to pick many different cars, you have never had so much fun on a GBA before! With levels to suit all ages, this is the game which has been missing from the GBA, so slip on your racing suit, slide into the drivers seat, and skid the car away in the best 3D crazy GT racer action you can get on GBA.



Originally created for GBA Broken Circle is coming to you on a range of formats in the near future! Broken Circle - a magical RPG journey. An adventure on a grand scale, isometric graphics, over 12 scenarios with a total of 101 game maps, 18 backdrops for fighting, with various scenarios that bring forth the history of the three principal characters, each with different 21 techniques of fighting that are learned through experience, or the finding of hidden objects within the game. An all new combat system based on our original idea, sections of search and exploration in the classical style of Japanese Style Roleplaying games like 'Breath of Fire 3', for example. 20 types of different enemies with many animations. Coming on various formats from phone to PPC during 2006!

Plus don't forget to visit the most popular Online Classic Console Retailer and Community site on the web – www.retro-trader.com !!



"Officially the worlds most popular online classic console retailer- in two categories" - 'From Alexa.Com statistics - October 2005 to Current Date'

ATOMIC FIREBALL

Back in the days before Burnout or even Pole Position we had to make do with Dinky or Matchbox cars and a lot of imagination. An FPS usually involved running round some bombsite, scrubland or the local churchyard firing at your mates with an assortment of cap guns and as for huge explosions, you only got those on war films...unless you were a ten year old with an unhealthy obsession in militaria and making things go 'BOOM'. My friend Dave and I had that particular unhealthy obsession. I'm not sure what his excuse was but I blame my granddad.

I never found out what Dave's dad did, I think he might have been a builder but whatever he did, he was a bit of a wheeler dealer and one bonfire night in the mid 70s got hold of a quantity of Chinese fireworks from one of his contacts. In those days foreign fireworks were a bit of a novelty sold in a rare few shops. Most of us made do with boxes of Astra, Brocks or Standard, nothing as exotic as these and tame stuff unless you count the time one nearly set fire to the conservatory.

Unfortunately given that their provenance could not quite be ascertained, the fireworks were a little on the duff side and about 70% of them failed to bang and sparkle as sensible fireworks are supposed to. These were thrown to one side and forgotten about as us kids stuffed our faces with the party food on offer.

However, come the following day Dave and I were poking through the ashes as bored kids are wont to do when we discovered the huge pile of dud fireworks. Back then bonfire nights were, on the whole not conducted in the pouring rain so the contents of the brightly coloured tubes was quite dry albeit slightly chilled. Of course, the next thought was obvious, "Why not make our own firework?" So we did.

The local haberdashers shop was nearby and a swift raid on the bins out at the back procured us an empty cardboard tube left over from a roll of material and in Dave's case a pair of ripped jeans as we scrambled back over the wall. We bunged one end up, filled it with the gunpowder mix from all the other fireworks with no thought of what they had originally been supposed to do, rockets, fountains, Roman candles, they all went into the mix. Then we cut the extra off, covered the other end with a circle

of cardboard and added a bit of blue touch paper.

The 'Atomic Fireball' as it was grandly named was ready. Now we had to find somewhere to let it off in peace and quiet. It was decided that the churchyard was the ideal place as we could hide behind the buttresses whilst setting it up.

Dave managed to steal some matches from his mothers kitchen and we set off. A few minutes later we were in position and ready for go. After a bit of "You do it!", "No! You do it!", the blue touch paper was lit and we retreated to a safe distance expecting a few pops and a lot of sparks. We were not ready for the ten foot jet of flame and sparks accompanied by the vast amounts of smoke that erupted from it. Standing amidst swirling smoke reminiscent of London peaseoupers of the 1950s our trousers went a little bit brown as the flame scorched a black mark up the side of the church. It looked like Beelzebub himself had farted up the side of the building. The look that passed between us said it all, "Oh...arse!"

If this obvious affront to God, that was bound to get us excommunicated from Sunday school should the vicar discover the culprits was not bad enough, at that moment the local policeman rounded the corner by the far end of the church. Now, this being a gentler time before international terrorism, crack cocaine and bullet proof vests we might have expected a Dixon of Dock Green style "Ello! Ello! What's going on here then lads?" or some such gentle enquiry to ascertain the nature of our crime. Instead we got a more earthy yell of "What the f*** do you think you're doing?" A touch more 'Sweeney' than 'Dixon' and one that hinted at dire punishments to come. At this point our trousers went several shades browner than they had been before and we decided that discretion was the better part of valour. We ran, scaling the seven foot high spiked railings that surrounded the churchyard in seconds before fleeing for our lives. The rest of the day was spent hiding in an empty garage on a local estate, convinced that it was next stop Borstal and we would never be able to bend down in the showers again.

We kept our heads down for a few weeks after that. At least until we saw a POW film on TV and decided to launch Dave's kid brother from the second floor of the house in a home-made glider...

the blue touch paper was lit and we retreated to a safe distance expecting a few pops and a lot of sparks. We were not ready for the ten foot jet of flame and sparks accompanied by THE vast amounts of smoke that erupted from it.



A SLIGHT CASE OF OVERBOMBING

As a kid I was fairly obsessed with making loud bangs and home-made explosives, napalm and the like, the sort of stuff any ordinary child whose grandfather was a scientist and of Irish extraction does.

When I was about 12 a woman moved in next door who was the type to complain at anything, especially anything that disturbed her wet blanket of a daughter who was something of a sensitive soul despite being about 18 at the time. For three years I suffered being complained about if a football sailed within ten feet of her house or if I was spotted with a cricket ball anywhere in the neighbourhood. Such items could be lethal if they came in contact with her daughter. Little did I know that in my fifteenth year revenge would be spectacular...

It was bonfire night 1981 and I had a bunch of my mates around and we had acquired an industrial quantity of top quality chinese fireworks from the local joke shop. They made some pretty fearsome bangs, roars and pretty lights and would probably be banned nowadays or if not banned, they would only be sold to responsible adults who had letters from the police, the vicar and at least three magistrates to prove their utter responsibility to be let anywhere near high explosives. They certainly would not have been in the hands of three fifteen year old pyromaniacs with a box of matches. In the case of some of the rockets even we were not sure whether to send them skywards or keep them in case the ever present Communist threat saw Warsaw pact tanks rolling down our leafy suburban streets. These things would take out an armoured column, no problems.

After several hours worth of screeches thuds, and a near miss that almost removed our other neighbours television aerial we had just finished making the neighbourhood sound much like downtown Baghdad does nowadays when who should appear but the neighbour to complain that the noise of our fireworks had "made my daughter wet her knickers in terror!"

Now what total spoon says to a bunch of evil minded fifteen year olds that they had made a 21 year old woman wee herself and not expect something to be triggered in said fifteen year olds minds? Especially as over the years this woman had complained about us playing football, cricket and even just lounging around the back lawn of my house. In the annals of stupid things to say that one sentence has to rate pretty highly.

Naturally this little fact fermented in our minds until a month or so later

when we did something truly evil. The daughter had a moped that was kept at the back of the house and to get there she had to wheel it down an alleyway between the two houses. At one end of the alleyway was a flight of steps with a surrounding wall that she had to pass. Every day at 5.30 on the dot she would arrive home and her mother would come out to help her push the moped down the alley to the back of the house.

As it happened, on the day in question I had discovered a large banger left over from bonfire night that I had sort of souped up a bit, possibly to take out a tank or two. My two mates and I just happened to be outside at 5.30pm wondering what we could blow up. It was after all far better than doing maths homework. We saw mother and daughter arrive at the end of the alley with the moped and under the cover of late autumn darkness the banger was lit and lobbed behind the wall that surrounded the steps. The detonation could not have been better timed if we had tried. Just as they were about six feet from the wall it went off behind the brickwork...

BLLLLLAAAAAAaAAAAAMMM!!! and I swear it echoed for a full ten seconds after that. It was closely followed by dual screams of "AAIIIIIEEEEE!!!" and "YAAAAAARRRRGGGGH-HHH!!!" and a whimper of "Muuuum-mm! I've pooed and wet myself!"

Meanwhile the three of us were hiding behind the garden shed trying not to wet ourselves either. Not through terror but because we were in absolute hysterics as the moped was forgotten and the daughter waddled inside like a cowboy who had forgotten his horse.

Unfortunately a few hours later the neighbour turned up on our doorstep to regale my parents of how their son had made her daughter...well, you already know that. I was hauled out and given a right royal b*****king for it and made to apologise profusely but when the door was shut and she had gone my dad nearly bust a gut laughing. Seems he and my mum were fed up with this woman and her daughters constant moaning about everything as well and considered it justice well done. Oddly I got a pocket money raise soon after. Nowadays it would have got me an ASBO. The next day a solitary pair of Bridget Jones pants appeared on the washing line next door as if to signal our victory to the entire neighbourhood and for several years to come every kid in the neighbourhood referred to the daughter as 'John Wayne'.

THE BLUE MAN

At the risk of sounding like an old fart and going into rambling discourses about remembering when all this was fields and "I fought at Wipers y'know!" there was a time when kids did not have to rely on a box of electro-trickery beneath the television for their entertainment. Don't get me wrong, games consoles and PCs are great but back in the 70s we had the great outdoors, bombsites and ...er...Dean.

Dean was the local hard lad. About a year older and twice the size of most of us he made Arnie look like Kenneth Williams. He wasn't however too blessed in the brains department but what he lacked in intelligence he certainly made up for in brawn. When you saw him coming you not only ran but tried to get a plane out of the country too.

One day myself and my two mates, John and Mark decided to take our airguns up to the waste ground at the back of the printworks. This being the 70s meant that there were still a few bombsites left from the Luftwaffes little excursions of 1941 and this place was no exception. It was a great place to hang out being a mixture of abandoned allotment, bombed out buildings and industrial refuse tip used by the printers. Back in those days three lads with airguns did little to excite anyone unlike nowadays when we could expect four vans of the local finest and an MP5 stuck in our ears by a black clad member of SO19 just in case we were Al-Qaeda (under 12s division).

For an hour or so we were happy plinking away at rusty tins set up on a piece of wall then growing bored we began to scout around for better targets. Our searching led us to the printers rubbish pile and we discov-

ered a whole load of empty aerosol glue cans. These were duly set up, we retreated to a safe distance and began our marksmanship again. John had a decent .22 calibre rifle as a) his parents were pretty well off and b) he had stolen it from his older brother. Using this we were rewarded with a few decent pops and fizzes as the cans punctured

under the onslaught. Then we got more adventurous when Mark found some spray paint cans and we remembered the scene from Kellys Heroes when Oddball and his tank crew fire paint rounds "because they make beautiful pictures".

This time though the cans stubbornly refused to burst and in our attempts to create 'art' we failed to notice the arrival of Dean until we were interrupted with "Whatchoo doin' then?" followed by "You poofs ain't doin' it right!" at which he seized John's rifle and marched up to the row of cans on the wall. At point blank range he took aim and fired. Time seemed to stand still and the resulting "FWOOOOOOSH!" seemed to take bullet time proportions as the half filled, pressurised can of blue paint ruptured covering Dean from head to toe.

The three of us were in something of a quandary. Dean had a reputation that could see us beaten to a pulp but to see him standing there resembling a Smurf just cracked us up. In the end we solved the dilemma by delivering him home, knocking on the door and leaving him on the doorstep for his mum to find whilst we legged it down the road as fast as we could, which wasn't very fast as we were laughing too much. We were later told by a kid who lived next door to him that he had been escorted into the back yard by his father and scrubbed with turpentine to get the paint off but for the next few weeks whenever we saw him he had a faintly blue tinge about him that soon earned him the nickname 'Papa'.

It was bonfire night 1981 and I had a bunch of my mates around and we had acquired an industrial quantity of top quality chinese fireworks from the local joke shop...

Dean had a reputation that could see us beaten to a pulp but to see him standing there resembling a Smurf just cracked us up.

SCHOOL DAZE

Mr Roberts, our chemistry master was an extremely trusting teacher but in hindsight it was probably a bad decision to invite 6th form science group 1 to bring alcoholic beverages in to school for an experiment on distillation. Perhaps our previous escapades that had involved gassing half the school, almost killing the headmaster and leaving a large smoking crater in the demonstration desk in Lab 2 had slipped his mind that week.

The fateful day arrived and with it came the sound of clinking bottles from various rucksacks. Perhaps wisely, other teachers insisted we left our experimental materials in the science lab so it was thus that the fume cupboard came to resemble a bar as various bottles liberated from parental sideboards were stacked within. In theory only a small amount would be needed for the experiment. We had brought enough to keep George Best, Oliver Reed and a small army of winos unconscious for a week.

Our chemistry lesson was the last two periods of the day, in the afternoon and it started innocuously enough...as most disasters do. It started with us distilling Simons mums Sherry to produce neat alcohol. From there it went downhill. Bored with setting it on fire we wondered what else we could do with it.

As fate would have it, about halfway through the lesson Mr Roberts was called away to deal with a problem and being the trusting soul he was left us on our own. It was then that Mark decided to see what his grandmothers Sanatogen tonic wine tasted like and before long bottles were being passed around like some mad wine tasting experience. I had 'borrowed' two bottles of my fathers homemade Orange wine, this, most of the participants in that Bacchanalian excess swear to this day was our undoing. Calling it wine was a bit of a misnomer, my father was in talks with NASA as they wanted it to fuel their space shuttles. Generous amounts were sloshed into some of the cleaner beakers and knocked back leaving participants gasping at what was described as 'a bit of pokey old tackle' by another mate in later years. In fact, if prohibition had been in force my father could have expected a visit from Elliot Ness and the boys with a selection of axes and a warrant.

By now Mr Roberts had been gone for almost an hour and the effects of rapid alcohol consumption had kicked in as unlike current teenagers the most any of us had con-

sumed was a white wine or some of Auntie Mabels Port on Christmas day. Mark began to look green round the gills, Karen and Rachel were slumped against the cupboards at the back of the labs, Chris had wandered off down the corridor and Andy was face down amidst a sea of beakers and me? I was attempting to convince Martin that mixing all the booze that was left into one super cocktail was probably a bad thing to do. Unfortunately I was having little success, mainly down to my own advanced state of inebriation. Grans Advocaat had never had this sort of effect on me.

We might have managed to get away with it if no-one had spotted us weaving our way out of the school gates at home-time and providing none of the teachers turned up. It wasn't to be and for us it could only get worse as the headmaster arrived just as Andy woke up and went "YAAARCH!" into one of the sinks. The head took one look at the semi-conscious bodies slumped around the lab and Martins super-cocktail that was bubbling away lethally on the front bench and asked what was probably the stupidest question of his life..."What on earth do you think you're doing?"

Looking back, Martins slurred answer of "Biology experiment sir, Effects of alcohol on human metabolism. Been a bit too successful!" may have been the wrong one but it was absolutely inspired at the time.

it was probably a bad decision to invite 6th form science group 1 to bring alcoholic beverages in to school for an experiment on distillation.

RetroPassion.Co.Uk

Each issue Retro Fusion will be looking at a company or group of individual who provide a service, albeit hobby or commercial, to the retro scene. This issue we will look at Retro Passion (www.retropassion.co.uk), a company devoted to bringing you the very best retro goodies at affordable prices.

Please tell Retro Fusion a little bit about RetroPassion.Co.Uk

"RetroPassion.Co.Uk is a retro-based community website that offers an online shop for all your gaming needs, a community forum for people to express their views, interests and opinions on retro gaming, as well as new gaming and technical support from many enthusiastic members.

Who is involved with RetroPassion.Co.Uk's service?

"The main people behind RetroPassion.Co.Uk are Tom Butler, who is the joint owner and director along with myself (Barry Tyler) and the technical support and web building is handled by Richard Sussex of Designbysilverside.Co.Uk and some of his team.

We also have support from our core members, who support us by providing reviews for games, input on suggestions to make RP a better experience for everyone who visits us."

When did you form RetroPassion?

"RetroPassion.Co.Uk went online officially on the 1st July 2004, but we worked on the building of the website and getting the stock needed for such a website many months before this."

Why did you start RetroPassion?

"RetroPassion started as an idea, a dream really, whilst discussing our dream jobs on a night out between friends.

Myself and Tom have been friends for many, many years and enjoyed playing everything we could get our hands on from being 5 year old kids - all the way up till now really.

As we sat and discussed the 'dream job' so to speak, we were coming out with the usual dream jobs, such as being a footballer, F1 driver, Hugh Hefner (yes seriously) and we said how great it would be to work with the games we loved for all these years.

We went off with the idea after a few drinks and before we knew it, we had a basic, but great idea of how to achieve this and from that point on, we focused all our energies into making what you now know as RetroPassion.

What type of goods do you sell?

We try to offer something really for everyone that likes gaming on any level. Whether you prefer the more casual approach to retro-gaming, we offer the more commercial titles that as a kid you enjoyed playing, such as Sonic, Super Mario Bros, Probotector, Outrun, Space Invaders - all the way to the more collectable games and systems, such as the Vectrex and over 50 boxed, as new titles, Neo Geo Pocket Colour and such classics as Metal Slug, Capcom Card Fighters Clash.

We have a wide variety of classic games and systems to suit every taste and budget - that's why we feel we have been

successful, when we combine this with our user friendly website and high customer service ethics.

Where do you source your stock?

We always try to source from fellow collectors, as the condition is usually very good, and normally we tend to go for large 'bulk' lots, to make sure we can get it at a better price and pass the savings onto our customers.

We do also buy from other sources, although we tend to avoid buying on the whole from Car Boot sales.

We aim to offer all our games, systems and accessories in a collectable condition, such as good boxes, instructions and no markings - otherwise we just would become a online car boot seller effectively and we want to try and offer something different and more personal to anyone that shops with us.

As with all of our games and systems, we test them thoroughly before listing them on the site and also cover all sales with a money back guarantee to make sure everyone is happy that deals with us.

What are your future plans for RetroPassion?

Well, we have now just secured a new main office and large stock area for RP, as we outgrew our previous premises, which is due to the fact we have continued to expand since we started.

The new office is great, and we are in the process of changing over as we speak and will also allow us to market ourselves even more, due to now having an even better set-up and having our base all under one roof.

Also we plan to increase our stock levels in the next few weeks and more importantly, have it on the site for people to browse and buy if they wish. We are really positive that all these steps are taking us even more in the right direction.

Another plan is to be more involved within the scene and work to improve it along with everyone that has expanded it so much and made it such a pleasure to work within.

Why should the Retro Fusion readers come and visit RetroPassion?

People should feel comfortable when using our website - whether your interested in buying something from the online shop, simply using the forum for information and chatting with like-minded people, reading reviews of past events and shows or even reading news & interviews, we want everyone to feel at ease with the service we provide - that's what everyone really wants with a website - an easy, well-designed & useful experience, that appeals right across the spectrum (pardon the pun!).



from the left: Barry, Tom - (joint owners), with Leigh Koopa



Barry talks to Andrew Oliver



The RP stand at CGEU



Head on at CGUK

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the beloved C16
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